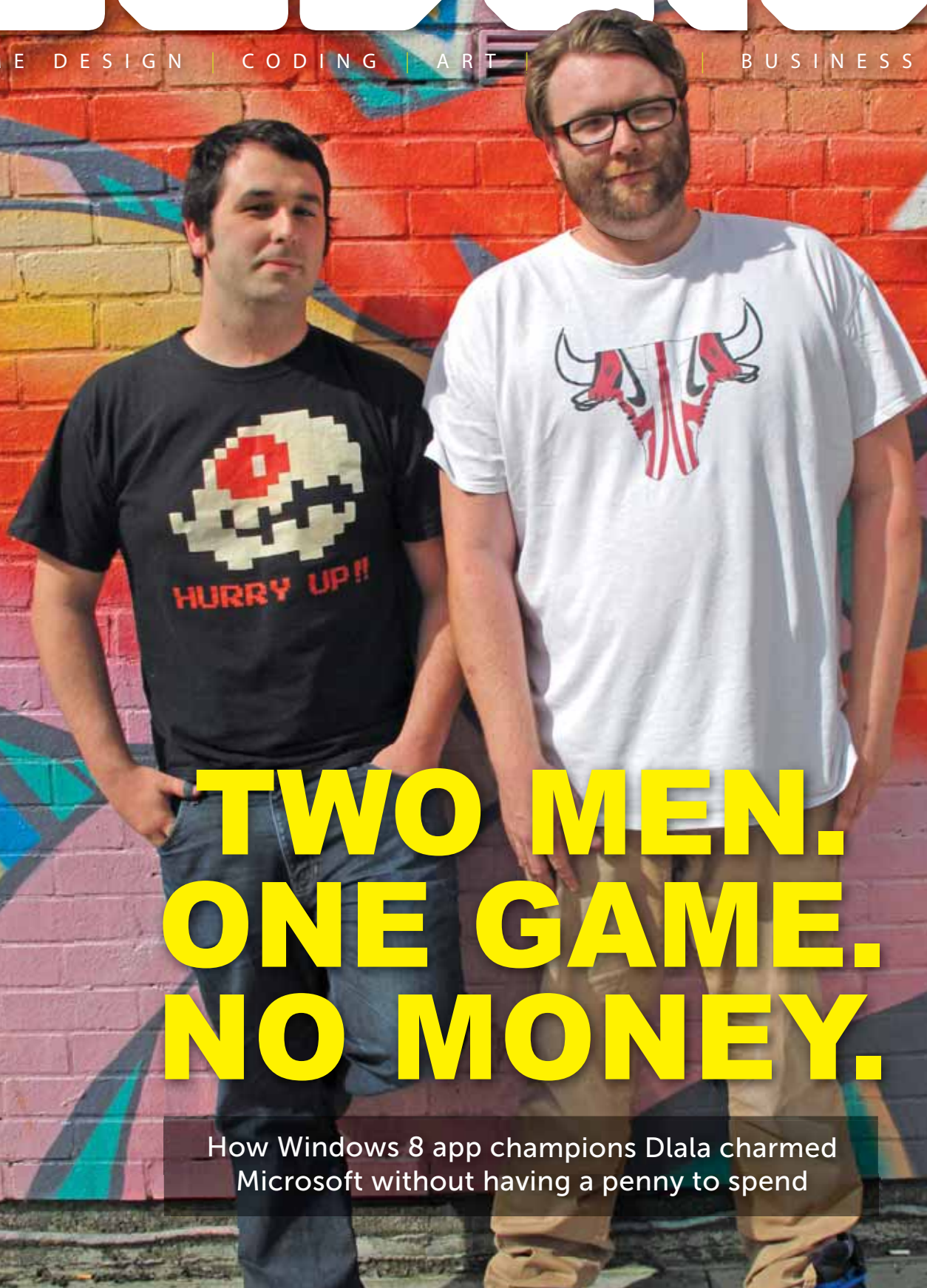


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*Sources: Arab Media Outlook 2010. Media on the Move 2009. A.T. Kearney. Introduction to Gaming. Michael Moore. Screen Digest. IDC.

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WHAT'S INSIDE THE BOX?

PETER MOLYNEUX ON CREATING CURIOSITY

"As much as I want to be a cigarette smoking, 20-hours-a-day programmer, I now know I'm not intelligent enough."

A games design legend on starting afresh, [page 32](#)



DLALA'S PRICELESS DEBUT

How a microstudio start-up with nothing to spend and everything to lose won over Microsoft



SOUTH WEST IS BEST?

We meet the studios making one of the UK's most idyllic corners a thriving development hub



THE FUTURE OF THE FRONT END

With touch-screen gaming and motion control well established, UI is changing. *Develop* investigates

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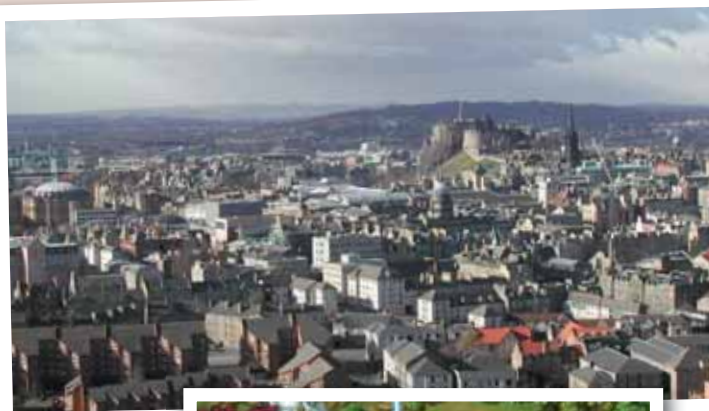
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EDITORIAL

IT'S NEVER TOO LATE

While hardware news from Apple and Nintendo jostled for the attention of the game-playing public, here in the world of *Develop* there was much else to ponder in the headlines.

Towards the end of September it emerged that some of games design's most iconic figures were moving on from games development.

BioWare co-founders Ray Muzyka and Greg Zeschuk are off to pursue new ventures, having called it a day at the *Mass Effect* studio that brought them fame and fortune. And over in Japan, *Rez* and *Child of Eden* creator Tetsuya Mizuguchi has announced he is to cease making games, although he will remain at Q Entertainment in a spokesperson role.

And good for them. It's encouraging to see that a lifetime making games and specialising doesn't mean doors that lead to opportunities outside of the sphere of development are locked for good.

Some games-making legends though, are taking a different approach to reinvigorating their careers. One is former Lionhead man Peter Molyneux, who caught up with *Develop* in Amsterdam (see page 32), revealing his delight at being back at the beginning, getting his hands dirty with code, and losing sleep as he worries about starting out from scratch. If you meet Molyneux any time soon, you'll see it in his eyes. He seems excited, enthusiastic and even a little sentimental.

Also in this issue, our cover stars are starting afresh (page 20). They may not be legends, but they quit decent jobs to go it alone.

So if you're tempted to make like Muzyka and start again, consider doing a Molyneux instead.

'A change is as good as a rest', so say the idiom writers, and judging by the new twinkle in his eye, Molyneux is testament to that.

You know better than I that making games is a damn tough way to earn a crust, so maybe its time to consider a fresh start. The more *Dlalas* and 22Cans we have in the industry, the better, and if developers can feel excited once more by beginning again, then we're all set to gain.



Will Freeman

will.freeman@intentmedia.co.uk

Will



Scotland hits back at 'ridiculous' report

Scottish developers, Government, trade bodies and observers rally to defend the country's games sector from a report that rates the entire nation's games industry 'gross value add' contribution to the economy at zero

by Will Freeman

THE SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT has moved to defend its country's games sector after a report branded 'ridiculously inaccurate' claimed the sector adds nothing to the nation's economy.

Commissioned by industry network Creative Scotland, the 'Arts and Creative Industries Economic Impact' study reported that in 2010, the games industry in Scotland employed 200 people – a number less than the 250 employed at Edinburgh's Rockstar North – and had a gross value add of £0, allowing for rounding down.

The claim that the Scottish games industry contributed a total of zero angered many, and prompted a swift Government response, with a statement released claiming that games add over £1 billion to the country's wealth.

Yet while bringing to question the accuracy of the figures in the report, the Scottish Government has also defended the Creative Scotland study's own recognition of the validity of its data.

"This study itself acknowledges upfront that the computer games sector data is anomalous," said a Scottish Government spokesperson. "Official Scottish Government statistics value the computer games, software and electronic publishing sectors in 2010 at just over £1bn 'gross value add' – representing about a third of the creative industries sector in Scotland."

The Government is now set to commission its own report into the country's games industry.

"We are aware of the need for more detailed and robust information about the

value of the computer games sector to the Scottish economy. This is something we are currently working on, in collaboration with industry and agency partners, including TIGA."

Companies creating computer games in Scotland are not necessarily registered for VAT, or registered in a way which causes their output to be included within a different sector, which the Government believes may be the root cause of the statistical anomalies, both specifically in the Creative Scotland report, and in more general recognition of the value of the computer games sector to the Scottish economy.

"This is not an end point," said Brian Baglow, editor of *Scottishgaming.net* and ambassador for the country's games industry, in reaction to the Scottish Government's

Edinburgh, home to Rockstar North's 250 staff. The recent report claimed just 200 are employed in Scotland's entire games industry



statement. "It's an opportunity to ensure that evaluating the scope, the definition and the value of the games and interactive sector in Scotland is carried out more intelligently. It gives us an excellent platform to move forward and to ensure that the Scottish Government, the cultural and enterprise agencies and the other 20-plus organisations here in Scotland start to communicate more effectively and perhaps work towards some common goals when it comes to 'computer games'."

“The official statistics on which the report is based are beyond the control of Creative Scotland.”

Creative Scotland spokesperson

Baglow previously stated that “the figures given – 200 employees and value add of £0 – are ridiculously inaccurate.”

He also called for a collective effort on behalf of Scotland's creative industries to improve the process of making information available.

Creative Scotland has moved to defend the study, insisting it makes clear that some of the limitations of the numbers contained within were recognised in the original publication of the report in June this year.

“The official statistics on which the report is based are beyond the control of Creative

Scotland,” said a spokesperson for the body. “Their limitations were acknowledged at the time of publication and figures from the games industry's trade body were highlighted. The report remains a valuable contribution to assessing the contribution of the arts and creative industries in Scotland, with the caveats that were highlighted at the time of publication.”

Indeed, the report does point out that: ‘recent research for the computer games industry appears to be anomalous to other recent research.’ Creative Scotland has also pointed out that the £0 gross value added figure is rounded down from a sum somewhere under £10m.

Elsewhere, UK trade body TIGA conducted its own research into Scotland's games industry in 2011, finding at the time that 668 were employed as permanent staff in 50 games developers, publishing and service companies, representing some 10 per cent of the UK's total games industry, with an estimated annual contribution of £30 million to HM Treasury.

“While the data in the Creative Scotland report was compiled across all of Scotland's arts and creative industries and the anomalous information explained by the absorption of companies into other categories in the survey, TIGA believes the results do not reflect the true value of the games industry in Scotland,” said the trade body's CEO Dr Richard Wilson.

Develop is currently in talks with the Scottish Government, and will bring you full details of the findings on the report's publication.

TAG GAMES: SCOTLAND IS THRIVING



DUNDEE MOBILE AND social studio Tag Games has a new worldwide head of sales in the form of Graham Chambers (*above*), who has spoken to *Develop* in defense of Scotland's games industry in the wake of the furor surrounding the recent Creative Scotland report.

Chambers, who joined Tag Games in September after five years as retail giant Amazon's head of games and software sales, said he believes it is widely accepted the 'Arts and Creative Industries Economic Impact' study inaccurately represented the nation's games industry.

“The games development scene in Scotland is really quite healthy, as far as I can see,” said Chambers. “The business here at Tag is doing very well, and there's a lot of good projects on the go. Some aren't public yet but I think when they are announced people will be quite taken aback by the scale of some of what's going on.”

“Along with Tag the rest of the Scottish Industry has a lot of stuff happening. Studios are expanding, and there are new offices for those recruiting new teams. It's a pretty vibrant place for games, I think.”

Chambers did highlight that the key concern is how the report may influence the opinions of those who's perspective comes from outside the games industry.

“People in the industry have a lot of knowledge

about it all,” he stated. “The broader concern is the way people outside of the industry who aren't as close to it understand the report. That is the worrying thing.”

“I think that if you've got a bit of industry knowledge and a bit of a handle on what's going on, you'd know from the outset that the report isn't accurate.”

Meanwhile, Tag Games MD Paul Farley – also speaking with *Develop* – pointed to the fact that precise methods of collating data on the games industry remain especially difficult to implement.

“There are very few accurate methods for tracking this kind of thing,” offered Farley. “We might now not have Realtime Worlds and DMA from the days of old, but what we do have in Scotland is a huge variety of start-up studios.”

“That's what we need in the current market; we don't necessarily need large studios of 200 or 300 people. And Scotland has people working across all kinds of platforms, and doing lots of original IP, and working with popular brands. The games industry really is thriving up here.”

Farley concluded by expressing his confidence in the fact that the Scottish Government recognises how important the games sector is to the country's economy.

Chambers, who has previously served at Ubisoft and Nintendo, brings 20 years in the industry to Tag Games.



//COMMENT: MOBILE

The next wave of mobile gaming

by Will Luton, Games Consultant



Long-term goals and piecemeal upgrades are what attract players to *My Horse* and games of its type, says Will Luton

ABOUT SIX MONTHS ago I said that we were on the brink of an exciting new wave, where console traditions and paid and free-to-play models meet with social. It's the next step of video games' evolution, moving back from me-too isometric games to focus on new innovations and quality.

These – predominantly mobile – games are taking what we've learnt in the past 30 years with the revolution on mobile and social platforms which is merging them with great success in the likes of *Infinity Blade*, *CSR Racing* and *Rage of Bahamut*.

The future is here and led by some of the smartest people in games. You should not ignore it.

NO-CORE

'Mid-core' is the gamification of 2012 – a bullshit buzzword. Superficially, the new wave is looking like the middle between traditional core looks, but with casual retention mechanics, leading to the term mid-core. I've said before that this is a red herring – forget how we traditionally defined our audiences.

People, self-identifying gamers or otherwise, are consuming a wide range of content now, from cars to horses via goblins. Give them an experience that works for the platform, with consideration to controls, ability and session length. Dress it how you want, but don't narrow it with assumptions on specific gameplay to fit themes.

What is important is to hit with a show and then suck in with high-retention gameplay.

LOOK BEAUTIFUL

The UK studio start-up scene is littered with ex-console teams. Many fail at trying to make console games for mobile, because they design like they always have: with long sessions and multiple control configurations, prolonged development cycles and a view to shrinking gameplay to handheld devices. Their real advantage is actually in visuals.

Moore's law applies to mobile GPUs and the average power available to consumers is leaping. Titles that push the capabilities are doing great numbers as platform holders – both Apple and Google – are showcasing them in their stores.

Stunning-looking real-time or pre-rendered 3D is real, working viral marketing. People are compelled to show off the capability of their new tech or the beauty of their discovery to their friends.

DEEPER THAN SKIN

Although the visuals are important marketing, what free-to-play and the lean start-up revolution has taught is how to do monetisation, retention and analytics. If you're inclined to deride *FarmVille* as junk, first understand why tens of millions love it.

At the heart of the new wave is short core loops – repeatable sections of gameplay that last somewhere between ten to 30 seconds, but are attached to deeper strategy or upgrade options. Yet unlike first generation titles, these core loops may be skill-based.

These loops consider first the time a player can likely play – a median mobile session is between two and three minutes – with the retention of long-term goals. These goals are piecemealed by continuous small upgrades, often facilitated by virtual economies or variable reinforcement IAPs, such as gacha. It makes the game accessible in short sessions, but still has fantastic longevity.

Overall, quality is marching upwards with consumer expectations, so the need for innovation is ever higher. We've reached a point where, as an industry, we understand the rules, motivations and economics of social and mobile games, and so we can be creative with the form, structure and presentation of our products.

Although I may have defined some likely traits above, titles, like *New Star Soccer*, feel fresh while not fitting these criteria. Others, like *My Horse*, fit but are far outside tradition core theming. Now is the time for designers to truly flourish and, with the tools they've gained, push gaming forward, not just in mobile, but all forms, from console to social.

Will Luton is a games consultant specialising in free-to-play. He is also former creative director at award-winning boutique studio Mobile Pie. Follow Will on Twitter at @will_luton, or visit www.will-luton.co.uk

develop iPad

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//COMMENT: TRENDS

From monster to saviour

by Ana Kronschnabl, Fluffy Logic

'CHILDREN ARE BECOMING aggressive, rude and uncooperative because of their addiction to computer games, research suggests.'

We have all seen those headlines, and heard the shock reports. Parents letting their child die whilst looking after their online, virtual daughter. Teenagers sitting in their rooms playing games for 25 hours a day whilst their brain dribbles out of their nose... not really but you get my drift.

We have always recognised the benefits of group activities such as board games. Who can criticise the wholesome rainy day pursuit of Trivial Pursuit or a family-fun-packed game of Monopoly? For a more challenging time we can choose 'go' or chess, games that our parents, and their parents before them, grew up with. The many benefits of gaming as a pastime have been well documented and are readily recognised.

However, these benefits have rarely been attributed to computer games, as indicated above. But why?

Certainly, when video games first emerged they were not a mainstream activity. Early adopters were stereotyped as nerdy, lonely, bedroom dwellers who had problems communicating with the wider world. There were some grains of truth in this image, in that, in order to engage with computers in any sense, there was a level of computer knowledge that was required. This assessment of the audience for computer games could well have more to do with the natural behaviour of pubescent boys than a true reflection of the games themselves.

BIG MONEY

Whatever these old-fashioned ideas were, the audience has grown at a stupendous rate over the last few years; the gaming industry brought in \$10.5 billion in 2009 and \$24.75 billion in 2011 in the USA alone.

These commonly accepted views are, however, being slowly eroded. Firstly, as I have just stated, the audience for computer games is increasing dramatically and, as a consequence is diversifying; women 18 years or older represent a significantly greater portion of the game playing population (30 per cent) than boys aged 17 or younger (18 per cent); 53 per cent of game players are male and 47 per cent female, and the average age of frequent games purchasers is 35.

The wider perception that all games are violent, involving large guns and zombies is not the full story. Whilst these games still have a strong hold over the video game super-genres or console market – sports games have 14.8 per cent and shooters 18.4 per cent of the market with strategy games having only 2.8 per cent – the mobile market strategy/puzzle games own 47 per cent, 27 per cent of personal computer games, and,



last but not least, 33 per cent of gamers play social games. With the consolidation of iTunes, the appearance of Windows 8 on desktops worldwide, the increase of smartphones of all types, to mention but a few, this trend can only continue.

“The many benefits of gaming as a pastime have been well documented and are readily recognised. However, they have rarely been attributed to computer games.”

A FAMILY AFFAIR

It seems that many of the old values associated with traditional gaming are now being applied to video games. Families are now embracing these new platforms in a more positive way. According to the in-depth, recent study by the Entertainment Software Association, a majority of gamers play games with their friends and family members.

In the US, 40 per cent of parents now play computer games with their children at least once a week, with 52 per cent of parents saying that video games are a positive part of their child's life and that they have useful side effects for communication and teamwork.

In two recent studies, revealed in the *Daily Mail* no less, 'researchers found that college students who teamed up to play violent video games cooperatively later showed more cooperative behaviour, and sometimes less signs of aggression, than students who played the games competitively.'

No longer seen as a lure for the maladjusted outsider, computer games are being heralded as a cure for some of the growing side-effects of living in this digitally rich, but emotionally bereft, modern world. Two game designers, Ida Toft and Amani Naseem, created a video game in Denmark designed specifically to create social change, 'The game *Junomi* was designed to address the problem of loneliness among Danish teenagers and create opportunities for the families to play and experiment with the ways in which they communicate together.'

How fascinating it seems that computer games have finally been allowed out of the darkened bedroom, moving not only into the light of the family hearth, but society as a whole is starting to claim some beneficial side-affects to these new games. Where to next? 3D VR Battle Chess as a training tool for Star Fleet Academy?

Chess sharpens the mind – and the same is true of computer games, Kronschnabl argues

Ana Kronschnabl is CEO and creative director at games and digital content studio Fluffy Logic, which has produced titles for a wealth of platforms across console, mobile and online. Fluffy Logic is currently at work on social game *UrZoo*. www.fluffylogic.net



//COMMENT: BUSINESS

Back to the future of TV gaming

by **Rick Gibson**, Games Investor Consulting

TV hardware producers are struggling to commit to gaming on smart televisions, says Gibson, although offerings from LG (above) are moving in the right direction

SOMETHING IS STIRRING in a backwater of the games market – gaming on connected TVs. The market leaders have raised money; London-based PlayJam and Paris-based Visiware booked \$5m and €5m respectively, while US-based TransGaming acquired Oberon's connected TV division for \$7m. One analyst group forecasts that this sub-\$100m market will grow to \$1.6bn by 2016, making it one of the fastest growing games markets ever seen. What's reinvigorating this formerly moribund market, why did it fail last time, and what opportunities and challenges does it face this time?

Gaming on TVs was the next big thing a decade ago, as cable and satellite operators shipped 'powerful' new set-top boxes to tens of millions of pay-TV subscribers. Consumers played casual games in gaming channels or walled gardens using TV handsets. Play rates and revenues started high as British/European operators heavily marketed well-known titles like *Tetris*. New companies started up and analysts anticipated multi-billion dollar market values.

OVER THE SET-TOP

But within two-to-three years, the global market's revenues had plateaued at under \$100m, a small fraction of forecasts.

What happened? Set-top boxes had been overhyped but under-specced, with multiple operating systems and hardware variations making porting hard. Payments were patchy for cable operators and revenue shares low on satellite. With only a few games channels, the supply of original IP games dried up,

often leaving cloned or poorly ported games. Consumers, facing crashing set-top boxes, lengthy lag, handsets inadequate as games controllers and sometimes terrible UI, logged on and played in much lower numbers than anticipated. Most interactive TV games companies without dedicated channels either died or pivoted to more viable platforms.

“ Poor user experience of laggy, patchy, unlocalised and inaccessible app stores with absent customer service continue to put consumers off connected TVs. ”

The few survivors held on with low tens of thousands of monthly subscribers, a market that couldn't support more than a few companies. Perhaps the biggest killer of iTV gaming was the rapid growth of accessible alternatives for smart TV gaming's core audience of older females and young children. Downloadable, browser, social, mobile and then smartphone/tablet games were simply higher quality, free to try and eventually play, lower friction and accessible in volume.

As companies mount a fresh assault on smart TVs shipping in their hundreds of millions, similar hurdles must be overcome. The power of the technology is less of an issue, but lack of storage and fragmented

platforms still are. Poor user experience of laggy, patchy, unlocalised and inaccessible app stores with absent customer service continue to put off consumers.

Manufacturers have released little data on actual usage, presumably because it's a gloomy picture. This is far from the transparent commercial environment where rocketing monthly active user data could trigger a gold rush of developers. TV handsets are still inadequate as game controllers, compatible gamepads are scarce and TV manufacturers' development of multiple different motion controllers presents as much of a development challenge as an opportunity for studios.

Payment systems are still in their infancy and the potential of social and freemium is there, but who will invest in developing a viable eco-system at scale complete with quality content, social graphs, transparent data and low friction payments appropriate to different territories and demographics?

A CLEARER PICTURE

With gaming only one of multiple initiatives on their slates, TV manufacturers' commitment looks a little patchy. LG is moving in the right direction, and Sony plus Gaikai may presage a concerted push to bring high quality streamed gaming to its televisions, but it's a fragmented picture, particularly for market-leader Samsung with substantial app store variations geographically.

The reborn smart TV games channels, flush with VC cash, are building end-to-end platforms, but it remains to be seen if they can generate sufficient volume.

Google and Apple may yet invest to open this market and develop the appropriate commercial and content eco-systems, but distribution is a challenge. Meanwhile, Microsoft is innovating in this area, for example with the TV/games mash-up between *National Geographic* and *Relentless*.

Perhaps the hardest issue to solve – attracting players from social and mobile alternatives – may be more intractable. For most, connecting TVs is just another piece of latent functionality that remains unused. We need reasons to start playing frequently, and it'll probably take more than an *Angry Birds* port. Play rates are still low and an average connected TV game's monthly sales currently peak in the low thousands, with averages well below that. Unless games providers and app stores can find a key that unlocks mass market adoption, history could repeat itself.

Rick Gibson is a director at Games Investor Consulting, which provides commercial check-ups, strategy and data to games, media and finance companies.
www.gamesinvestor.com



//COMMENT: STUDIO MANAGEMENT

Insourcing

Tim Heaton, The Creative Assembly

HIDDEN AWAY BETWEEN a brewery and a greasy spoon café close to Horsham railway station is our newest investment.

You can't tell from the outside but it's one of Europe's biggest in-house motion capture facilities, just a half a mile or so away from our main studio, here in beautiful West Sussex. 46 cameras, 160 square meters of capture space, and as much free beer as you can manage – they put the wrong labels on a batch next door, and let us have a few.

There are some great external resources for motion capture that we could use both in this country and abroad, and indeed we're using one at the moment for some capture that needed to be started before we finished the studio, but that's top secret. Many development studios would be content to continue to outsource this kind of work when they need to, but it says something about what we're trying to do here, and what kind of studio we are that we choose to do as much as possible in-house.

AN INSIDE JOB

We think the decision to invest in infrastructure, engines, tools and facilities shouldn't only be based upon relatively short-term financial decisions. Understanding the deep, subtle impacts these decisions can have across many areas is important too. The motion capture studio example is a good one. Not only does it give us freedom to experiment, try ideas that might fail, learn to finesse our process, but because it's always there it means that we never have a reason to make a compromise. If we have some animation that is okay, but not great, instead of settling for it, or rebooking a facility – with the associated sour face of me having to sign off a purchase order for more money – our animation teams can just do what they want to do to ensure the best possible quality. That creates a kind of tipping point, where the process doesn't get in the way and is never an excuse.

Another example would be the many reasons why we've developed a custom engine for our *Alien* console game at a time where many are happy to buy into Unreal or CryEngine. The straightforward ones included the fact that we had very specific requirements, we already had a good starting point, and that we knew the next generation of hardware was coming and we wanted to be able to move fast on that, and not be constrained by a third party engine. However, one of the more subtle reasons is that we believe 'rocket scientists' – team members who are technically brilliant at what they do – help us differentiate ourselves from other studios and other games. These rocket scientists can be frontline graphics programmers, or AI gurus, or technical artists, or level designers with a depth of knowledge



and inspirational ability that is eye opening. I think we already have more than our fair share, but people like that don't want to be

Establishing our own motion capture studio give us freedom to experiment, try ideas that might fail and learn to finesse our process.

constrained, and so want the freedom to influence tools, pipelines and engines in a very direct way. They don't want to have to wait for the 'next major release in six months time'.

DECISIONS, DECISIONS

These brilliant people are a vital part of our DNA, and one of the reasons we chose to develop our own console engine was to reinforce our ability to attract them and keep them interested.

Each in/out decision is made on its own merits, and we are certainly not averse to

going out-of-house when it makes sense. Recently, we chose to develop *Total War Battles* using the Unity engine and tools. We wanted to move fast and be available across plenty of different platforms, and we also wanted to experiment with gameplay, but not get bogged down too much in the technical challenges of platforms that are evolving very quickly. So, it made sense to use an engine that in some respects restrained the team to consider what we felt was important, and we've been really happy with the results.

It's interesting that the barriers to making games keep coming down – many of the technical and development hurdles are lower than ever. The differentiating factors now are great people and allowing them the space to do what they're great at.

There's a danger that doing too much out-of-house might take away some of the freedom these people need.

The Creative Assembly's James Maxwell in the new facility, which he helped construct with a team

Tim Heaton is studio director at The Creative Assembly, the UK-founded studio behind the acclaimed *Total War* series of PC games, as well as numerous other works including original and licensed products.
www.creative-assembly.co.uk

THE MONTH AHEAD

A look at what October has in store for the industry and beyond



OCTOBER 2ND Resident Evil 6.

Leon and Chris return to do battle with Umbrella and the undead once more.



OCTOBER 11TH Brazil Game Show 2012.

Witness the extravagance of the carnival continent at this blossoming games show.



OCTOBER 19TH Dance Central 3.

Boot up Kinect, put your street threads on and get the crew in for a dance-off or two.



OCTOBER 28TH International Animation Day.

Celebrate the visual medium that is a cornerstone of gaming and much more.



OCTOBER 4TH World Teachers' Day.

Paying homage to the tutors and mentors who helped make us who we are.



OCTOBER 16TH World Food Day.

Eat, be merry, and spare a thought – and some food – for those less fortunate.



OCTOBER 20TH GameCity 7.

Nottingham's annual citywide slice of gaming culture returns to captivate and entertain



OCTOBER 31ST Halloween.

Settle in for a cheesy movie and ignore the trick or treaters on this ghoulish holiday.



OCTOBER 4TH GameX 2012.

Turkey takes the stage with its huge expo, tournament and awards event in Istanbul.



OCTOBER 18TH Games Media Awards 2012.

Game writers and critics get together to clap, cheer and drink beer.



OCTOBER 26TH Skyfall.

Just in time for the spy's 50th anniversary, Bond 23 featuring Daniel Craig hits cinemas now.



OCTOBER 31ST Assassin's Creed III.

Will the American Revolution be the end for the hooded man at last? Don't bet on it.

DEVELOP DIARY

Your complete games development event calendar for the months ahead



LONDON GAMES CONFERENCE

November 21st, 2012

London, UK

www.londongamesconference.com

Now in its fourth year, Europe's leading games conference continues to tackle the challenges facing the interactive industry.

This year's theme is digital games discovery and distribution. The fight-to-be-found has never been more challenging, and LGC will review it.

Speakers include Google, Twitter, EA, Disney, Sega and Yogacast, with other high-profile names to be announced in the coming weeks.

Visit the website for more on the event, as well as early bird tickets.

OCTOBER 2012

APPS WORLD EUROPE 2012

October 2nd to 3rd

London, UK

www.apps-world.net/europe

MCV / XBOX 360 PUB QUIZ

October 4th

London, UK

www.mcvuk.com/events

INDIECADE 2012

October 4th to 7th

Los Angeles, USA

www.indiecade.com

GAMEX 2012

October 4th to 7th

Istanbul, Turkey

www.gamex.com.tr

GDC ONLINE

October 9th to 11th

Austin, USA

www.gdconline.com

BRAZIL GAME SHOW 2012

October 11th to 14th

São Paulo, Brazil

www.brasilgameshow.com.br

GAMES MEDIA AWARDS 2012

October 18th

London, UK

www.mcvuk.com/events

GAMECITY 7

October 20th to 27th

Nottingham, UK

www.gamecity.org

CASUAL CONNECT KIEV

October 24th to 26th

Kiev, Ukraine

kyiv.casualconnect.org

NOVEMBER 2012

LAUNCH CONFERENCE 2012

November 13th to 14th

Birmingham, UK

www.launchconference.co.uk

MONTREAL INTERNATIONAL GAME SUMMIT 2012

November 13th to 14th

Montreal, Canada

www.mtldgtl.com

LONDON GAMES CONFERENCE 2012

November 21st

London, UK

www.londongamesconference.com

GAME CONNECTION EUROPE 2012

November 28th to 30th

Paris, France

www.game-connection.com

DECEMBER 2012

MOBILE GAMING EUROPE 2012

December 6th to 7th

London, UK

videogamesintelligence.com/mobile

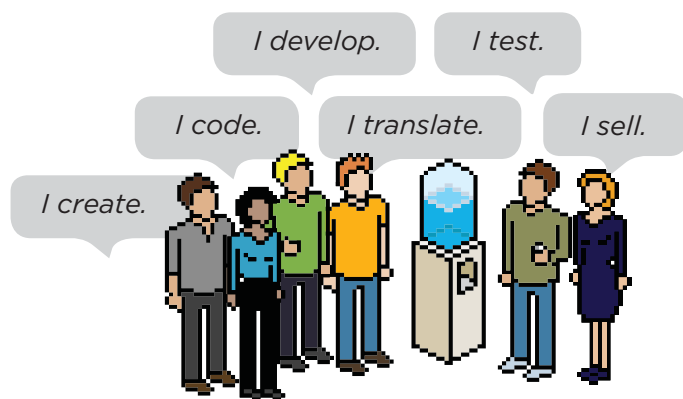
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The World's Best Game Studios

DEVELOP'S RANKING OF the world's most successful games developers is better than ever for 2012, providing a hugely valuable guide to the global games industry.

Now live in Apple's App Store, the latest edition of the *Develop 100* features a list of the top hundred developers in the world based on the revenues generated by their games.

It is available only for iPad, and costs just £4.99 for a volume overflowing with insight and data. That includes profiles on each of the 100 studios, sales numbers and statistics, as well as a wealth of background facts and analysis.

GfK Chart-Track data has been used to formulate the list. Chart-Track has the most accurate chart reporting tools on the planet, monitoring the sale of almost every game and peripheral sold anywhere and everywhere in the UK.

In 2012 EA Canada came out on top, beating the likes of Nintendo, Ubisoft Montreal, Infinity Ward and Traveller's Tales to the top spot.

But this month, we take a look at Epic Games, which has outranked numerous other industry giants, and Avalanche Studios, which is still cashing in from *Just Cause 2* sales. Where do they come in the list? You'll have to check the *Develop 100* itself to find out.

And our list doesn't stop with the current 2012 volume. Buying the iPad *Develop 100* will guarantee you access to the other Top 100s we'll be launching in the coming months. Volume One is for retail sales, but we'll be adding lists for online, social and mobile standings in future.

Want to find out more?

The **Develop 100** is now available for £4.99 within the *Develop Magazine* app for iPad.

Download the **Develop Magazine** app now through the iTunes store.



£150.83m

Total UK revenue created in 2011 by the Top Ten studios in Continental Europe



£113.27m

Total UK revenue created in 2011 by EA Canada single-handedly



» EPIC GAMES



UK RETAIL REVENUE IN 2011

£24.76m



» ABOUT

Founded: 1991

Independent

Location: Cary, NC, USA

www.epicgames.com

» FAMOUS FOR...

The *Gears of War* titles • Unreal Engine • Sister-team ChAIR's *Infinity Blade*

As famous in the development community for its tools as it is for its games, Epic has thrived as a business in the past year.

2011 saw the Unreal Engine continue to rise in status, *Gears of War 3* caused a sensation at retail with three million sales in one week, and Epic subsidiary ChAIR Entertainment again proved the potential of triple-A on iOS

with the second game in the *Infinity Blade* series.

Initially founded as Potomac Computer Systems in 1991, today Epic plays home to a number of games dev 'celebrities', including Cliff Bleszinski and Mark Rein. They seem to check their star-status at the door, though, and the firm is best known for spotting the next big thing in games tech.

STUDIO'S 2011 BESTSELLERS

GEARS OF WAR 3	FORMATS	PUBLISHER	RELEASE DATE	TOTAL REV
	XBOX 360			
	TOTAL	MICROSOFT	SEP 2011	£24.19m
GEARS OF WAR 2	XBOX 360	MICROSOFT	NOV 2008	£0.50m
	TOTAL			£0.50m
GEARS OF WAR	XBOX 360	MICROSOFT	NOV 2006	£0.06m
	TOTAL			£0.06m
UNREAL TOURNAMENT III	PC	MIDWAY	NOV 2007	£0.01m
	TOTAL			£0.01m



100

Our monthly analysis of the data from the latest Develop 100 continues with a look at two teams bringing in millions

2012 Edition Volume 1

» AVALANCHE STUDIOS



UK RETAIL REVENUE IN 2011
£2.04m



» ABOUT

Founded: 2003

Independent

Location: Stockholm, Sweden

www.avalanchestudios.se

» CURRENTLY MAKING...

The Just Cause outfit is today at work on new IP and licensed titles for 2013/14

Launching itself from stunt position and just managing to make it into this *Develop 100* is Avalanche Studios.

Glance at the data below and it's clear which game got the studio here. Two years post-release, *Just Cause 2* continues to be a bankable title.

The game's combination of open world action and satisfying gameplay mechanics, which make it near

impossible not to hurl protagonist Rico Rodriguez from planes, buildings, boats and anything else just for kicks, helped it make over £2 million in its second year on the market.

In 2011, Avalanche expanded its operation to New York and now employs over 170 staff. It is currently working on original and licensed IP due for release across 2013 and 2014.



£2.04 m

Just Cause 2's UK revenue in 2011



£105.88m

The total 2011 UK revenue of the four Ubisoft studios to make the *Develop 100* list



» THE 100 STUDIOS

DEVELOPER	COUNTRY
1ST PLAYABLE	USA
2K CZECH	CZECH REPUBLIC
343 INDUSTRIES	USA
AMAZE ENTERTAINMENT	USA
ASYLUM	UNITED KINGDOM
AVALANCHE SOFTWARE	USA
AVALANCHE STUDIOS	SWEDEN
BEHAVIOUR INTERACTIVE	CANADA
BETHESDA	USA
BIGPARK	CANADA
BIOWARE	CANADA
BLACK LANTERN	USA
BLIZZARD ENTERTAINMENT	USA
BLUE CASTLE GAMES	CANADA
BUNGIE	USA
CAPCOM	JAPAN
CAT DADDY	USA
CERASUS MEDIA	GERMANY
CITY INTERACTIVE	POLAND
CODEMASTERS	UNITED KINGDOM
CODEMASTERS BIRMINGHAM	UNITED KINGDOM
CREATIVE ASSEMBLY	UNITED KINGDOM
CRITERION GAMES	UNITED KINGDOM
CRYTEK	GERMANY
DIMPS	JAPAN
EA BLACK BOX	CANADA
EA BRIGHT LIGHT	UNITED KINGDOM
EA CANADA	CANADA
EA DICE	SWEDEN
EA TIBURON	USA
EDEN STUDIOS	FRANCE
EIDOS MONTREAL	CANADA
EPIC GAMES	USA
EUROCOM ENTERTAINMENT	UNITED KINGDOM
EXIENT	UNITED KINGDOM
FIREBRAND GAMES	UNITED KINGDOM
FROM SOFTWARE	JAPAN
FRONTIER DEVELOPMENTS	UNITED KINGDOM
GAME FREAK	JAPAN
GEARBOX SOFTWARE	USA
GREZZO	JAPAN
GUERRILLA GAMES	HOLLAND
HARMONIX	USA
HB STUDIOS	CANADA
HEADSTRONG GAMES	UNITED KINGDOM
HEAVY IRON STUDIOS	USA
HIGH MOON STUDIOS	USA
ID SOFTWARE	USA
INFINITY WARD	USA
INSOMNIAC	USA
KAOS STUDIOS	USA
KONAMI DIGITAL ENTERTAINMENT	JAPAN
LAND HO!	JAPAN
LEVEL 5	JAPAN
LIONHEAD STUDIOS	UNITED KINGDOM
MEDIA MOLECULE	UNITED KINGDOM
MONSTER GAMES	USA
NAMCO	JAPAN
NAUGHTY DOG	USA
ND CUBE	JAPAN
NETHERREALM STUDIOS	USA
NINTENDO	JAPAN
OBSIDIAN ENTERTAINMENT	USA
PEOPLE CAN FLY	POLAND
PIPEWORKS	USA
POLYPHONY DIGITAL	JAPAN
RARE	UNITED KINGDOM
RELIC	CANADA
RETRO STUDIOS	USA
ROCKSTAR NORTH	UNITED KINGDOM
ROCKSTAR SAN DIEGO	USA
ROCKSTEADY STUDIOS	UNITED KINGDOM
SEGA	JAPAN
SIDHE	NEW ZEALAND
SLEDGEHAMMER GAMES	USA
SLIGHTLY MAD STUDIOS	UNITED KINGDOM
SONIC TEAM	JAPAN
SPLASH DAMAGE	UNITED KINGDOM
SPORTS INTERACTIVE	UNITED KINGDOM
SQUARE ENIX	JAPAN
SUCKER PUNCH	USA
SUMO DIGITAL	UNITED KINGDOM
TEAM BOND!	AUSTRALIA
TECHLAND	POLAND
THE SIMS STUDIO	USA
THQ SAN DIEGO	USA
TOYS FOR BOB	USA
TRAVELLER'S TALES	UNITED KINGDOM
TREYARCH	USA
TURN 10 STUDIOS	USA
UBISOFT CASABLANCA	MOROCCO
UBISOFT FRANCE	FRANCE
UBISOFT MONTREAL	CANADA
UBISOFT REFLECTIONS	UNITED KINGDOM
VALVE	USA
VISCERAL GAMES	USA
VOLITION	USA
YUKE'S	JAPAN
ZOË MODE	UNITED KINGDOM

STUDIO'S 2011 BESTSELLERS

FORMATS	PUBLISHER	RELEASE DATE	TOTAL REV
JUST CAUSE 2			
XBOX 360	SQUARE ENIX EUROPE	MAR 2010	£1.23m
PLAYSTATION 3	SQUARE ENIX EUROPE	MAR 2010	£0.77m
PC	SQUARE ENIX EUROPE	MAR 2010	£0.05m
TOTAL			£2.04m





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"There always seems to be a party, a game jam or a developer meet-up going on."

Alex Ryley, Mutant Labs, p26

Completely Dlala?

Micro-start-up Dlala set out to make a game without a penny to spend. What were they thinking? p20



Thinking
outside the
boxes
p24



Region focus:
South West
UK
p26





No money? No problem

Brand new start-up Dlala's juggling balancing its raw indie make-up with Microsoft collaboration, while building a Windows 8 launch game without a penny to spend. **Will Freeman** meets the duo hoping to be the next big thing

Craig Thomas (left) and AJ Grand-Scrutton (right) formed Dlala after working together at both Jagex and Bossa Studios

DLALA IS A studio with a remarkable story, despite barely four months in business.

Formed in June this year, and founded by two ex-Bossa staff, it's a microstudio made up of a collective of friends, recent graduates and bandmates, and without a game to its name, it has charmed Microsoft, which is making the outfit a poster child of the new Windows 8 development scene.

It's first title, physics puzzler *Janky*, has been made on a zero budget. Dlala's two directors – chief creative officer AJ Grand-Scrutton and chief technical officer Craig Thomas – don't have a physical studio, haven't paid for any tools, are surviving on personal savings, have no investors involved, and don't presently pay the staff involved in the projects.

You read that right. Presently the team, including Grand-Scrutton and Thomas, are

working for free. They admit it's far from ideal, but if all goes well, the current studio model may mean that when the first paypackets do come in they may be substantial.

A LUCKY START

"We've been very lucky with the people we've got together for this project, and we don't want to come across as completely in support of working for free," says Grand-Scrutton. "But the problem is our starting point is really having no money."

That doesn't seem to have stopped Dlala's rapid progress, though. *Janky* will see release in October just weeks after its conception. Dlala's rate of creativity is down to – along with a lot of hard work – being accepted by a Microsoft business development initiative.

A chance meeting with a Microsoft coder at the Develop in Brighton conference less

than a month after the studio set up as a business ultimately led to the point where Dlala was accepted into the Microsoft BizSpark programme, a global project that helps software start-ups succeed by granting access to development tools and assisting with networking, securing investment and attaining marketing visibility.

"That gave us licences to high-end tools we needed at no expense, which was really cool," explains Thomas. "That in turn gave us a chance not to have to rely on only free tools."

It's hardly surprising they charmed Microsoft. Like so many other developers, the pair of directors are friendly, enthusiastic and infectiously positive. And subsequently, Dlala has had a direct line to Microsoft. In fact, the pair have impressed the tech giant so much the tiny UK studio has been thrust into the limelight by its somewhat unlikely bedfellow.



Early promo art for Dlala's game *Janky* (above), which has been built in a handful of weeks

ON THE MONEY

But what about that matter of unpaid staff? Aside from the Dlala directors, *Janky* is the creation of a graduate programmer, two UI coders and three artists, all sourced through social media or from Grand-Scrutton's other life as a musician, and all working from their own bases across the UK.

They all knew from day one that, until the project makes money, there would be no immediate cash in the endeavor. Most are in it for the experience and opportunity, and, say the directors, hugely dedicated, despite their present lack of financial reward.

"At the point we were looking for co-developers we couldn't tell them who we were working with," explains Grand-Scrutton. "So we were attracting these people based purely on our enthusiasm. It was only after that point, when they'd agreed to our NDA, that we could reveal that we were working very closely with Microsoft, who are providing us with all that support. And the guys we got as a result are amazing. To say that we got lucky is an understatement. We've got a programmer called Chris, and how he's not got snapped up by a big company I do not know, but we're so privileged to have people like him."

As a result the team's current life is far from one of luxury, and Grand-Scrutton jokes that presently treating his partner to a romantic night out involves a meal from the buffet of a cheap chain restaurant.

"But we don't at all encourage any kind of slave labour mentality," adds Grand-Scrutton. "If you can afford to pay people who are

talented, it shouldn't matter whether they are graduates or have ten years experience. If people can do the job, they deserve to get paid, and if we had money coming in, or we get investment or if the game does really well, everyone on the project will get money. That's hugely important to us."

"If you can afford to pay people who are talented, it shouldn't matter whether they are graduates or have ten years experience."

AJ Grand-Scrutton, Dlala

"Absolutely," adds Thomas. "That's the first thing the money's going on. Nothing matters to us more. This is all nothing without the people who are working on this project, and we want to pay them."

BAND TOGETHER

As mentioned above, when Grand-Scrutton's not making games, he can be found on the road with the pop-punk band *Who's Driving? Bear's Driving!*, in which he is a guitarist. And, says the musician, there's clear comparisons that can be drawn between the gigging musical outfit and the Dlala studio model.

Aspiring rock stars, after all, don't expect to get paid from the moment they join a band. The tangible nature of taking to the stage is

the obsession with music, the love of creativity and the thrill of live performance. Financial gain is a dream for many musicians; not an expectation from day one.

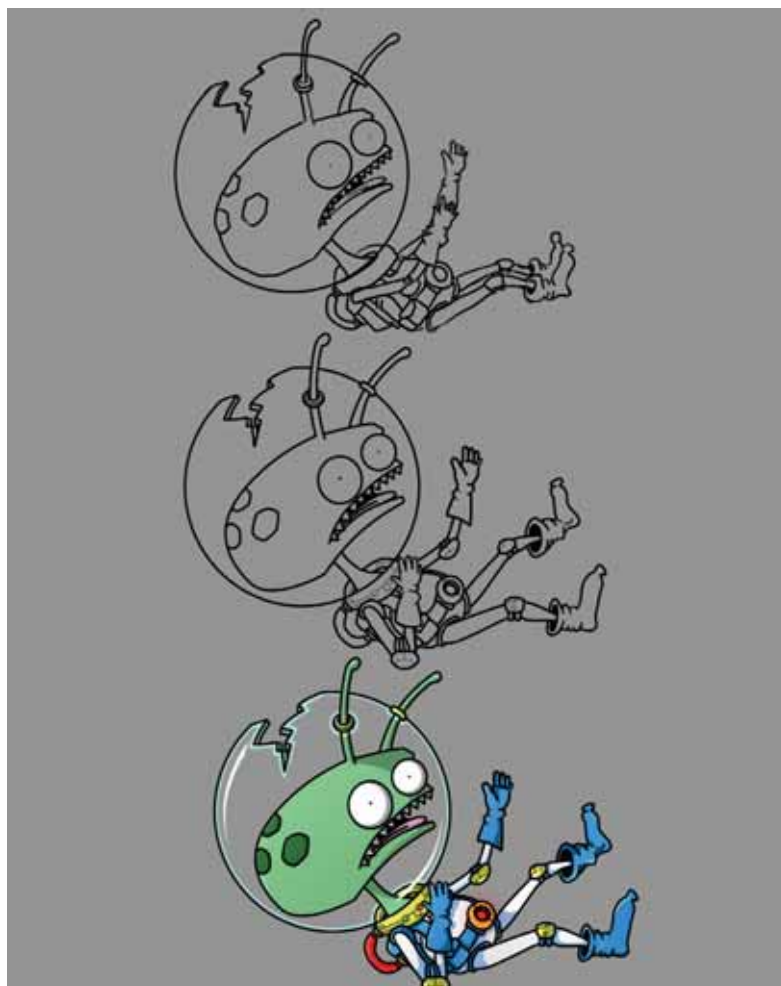
And so it is with Dlala, where the directors and their team make games unpaid for the love of the process, and only hope their effort will be rewarded in monetary form.

"It's scary how close the two things are," says Grand-Scrutton of the parallels shared by the music and games industries as he sees it. "Being in a band and forming a studio like Dlala is pretty much the same thing. I've been doing bands for ten years, and there I've been intimidated by the people higher up at the big companies. And yet there's a huge friendliness from the top directed at the guys down the bottom. It's just like the games industry in my experience."

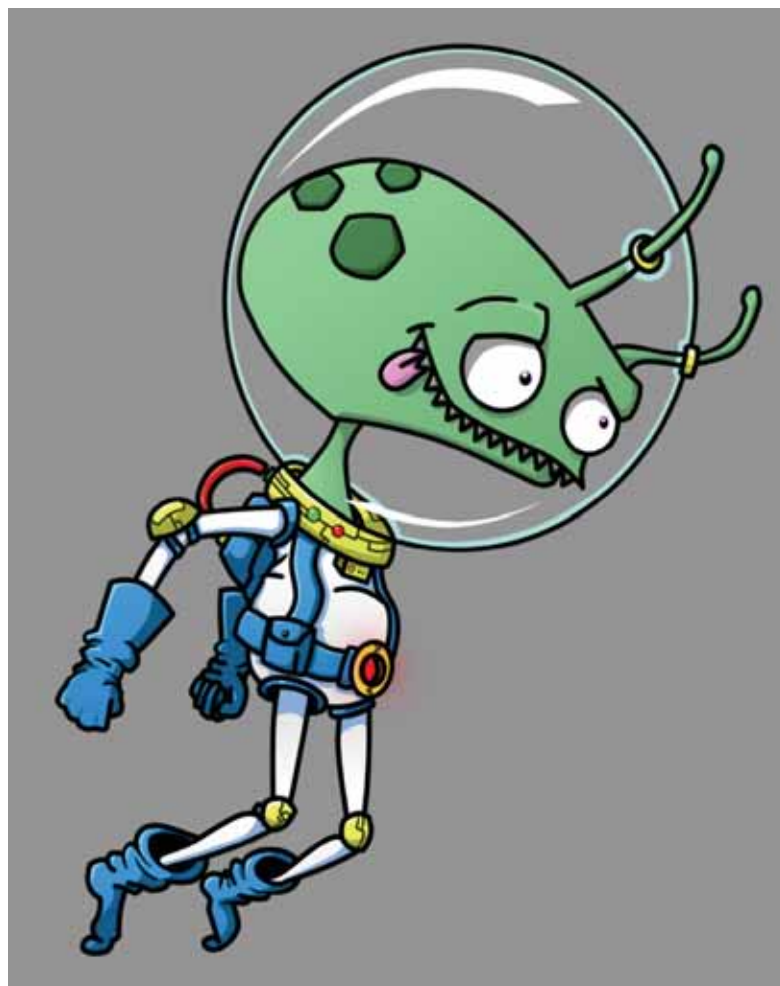
And like a band, says Grand-Scrutton, Dlala is devoted to being creatively free, and only prepared to work with people its members like. The team spends a lot of time together, and, according to the guitarist, the personally claustrophobic world of a small team nearing launch throws up challenges not dissimilar to those faced by a band on tour.

"Being in a tour bus in a band for 20 days sharing all that time together? Developing a game can sometimes feel like that, although without the smell."

Thomas and Grand-Scrutton push the analogy further, and while they again make clear their meekness about their cashflow, they ponder the idea that being the games development equivalent of a penniless band can be a significant motivator. ►



The distinct artwork for *Jankys* (above) was part of what attracted Microsoft to working with Dlada



► “There’s an ‘us against the world’ thing we feel at times,” offers Thomas. “In that way we’re not afraid to try and compete alongside the biggest games companies in the world, and the fact that we’re trying that with no money feels pretty cool. It’s a motivator, and it bonds us together.”

Thomas and Grand-Scrutton also suggest that a lack of money can also mean that by necessity an in-development game must be stripped back to its affordably creatable essential elements, making for a potentially better final product. In the same way that technical shortcomings can often stoke the fires of a developer’s creativity, it may just be that tightened purse strings can do the same.

JOINING FORCES

All that is very rock ‘n’ roll and romantic, but there’s the small matter of teaming up with Microsoft. Bill Gate’s business is often painted as some kind of malevolent tech empire, and in years gone by has struggled to establish a reputation as a bastion of indie gaming, despite efforts with the likes of XNA. Rightly or wrongly, some remain suspicious of Microsoft.

Can alignment with such a company really let a grass-roots indie stake a claim to true independence? Moreover, can Dlada really do as they wish without getting a sternly worded call from Microsoft?

“I think there is a misconception about Microsoft,” states Grand-Scrutton, who is clearly not a media trained servant of Gate’s kingdom. “Maybe it’s something I even had. But when I got talking to them at Develop in Brighton, and mentioned Windows 8, we could tell from the off they were really interested in us.

“And it wasn’t that faux interest we’ve all seen around the games industry, where people nod at you and smile regardless of what they think. That was strange, but it was amazing to talk with a company like Microsoft in that way.”

“It never feels like I work for Microsoft or anything like that. They are there to help us, but we’re making the game. It’s ours.”

Craig Thomas, Dlada

That same day of first contact, Grand-Scrutton made the relatively short journey home to Essex after the conference, and by the time he’d reached his destination, an email was waiting for him from Microsoft. Within a week the youthful developer was in Microsoft’s Reading office in the UK, and since then Dlada has enjoyed nearly daily contact and support.

“I’ve worked on Windows platforms before, be it on the phones or Xbox, and always for personal ‘messing around’ projects,” adds Thomas. “From that, I never really saw Microsoft as an especially involved company. But with this Dlada experience, they’ve really blown any preconceptions I had about them out of the water. We’re really very appreciative and genuinely impressed.”

As with their manner when discussing money, there’s a meekness to the Dlada

directors’ praise for Microsoft. They seem a little surprised themselves that the giant has been so good to them, but they are clearly delighted. And, it seems, the team is left to its own devices where ideas are concerned.

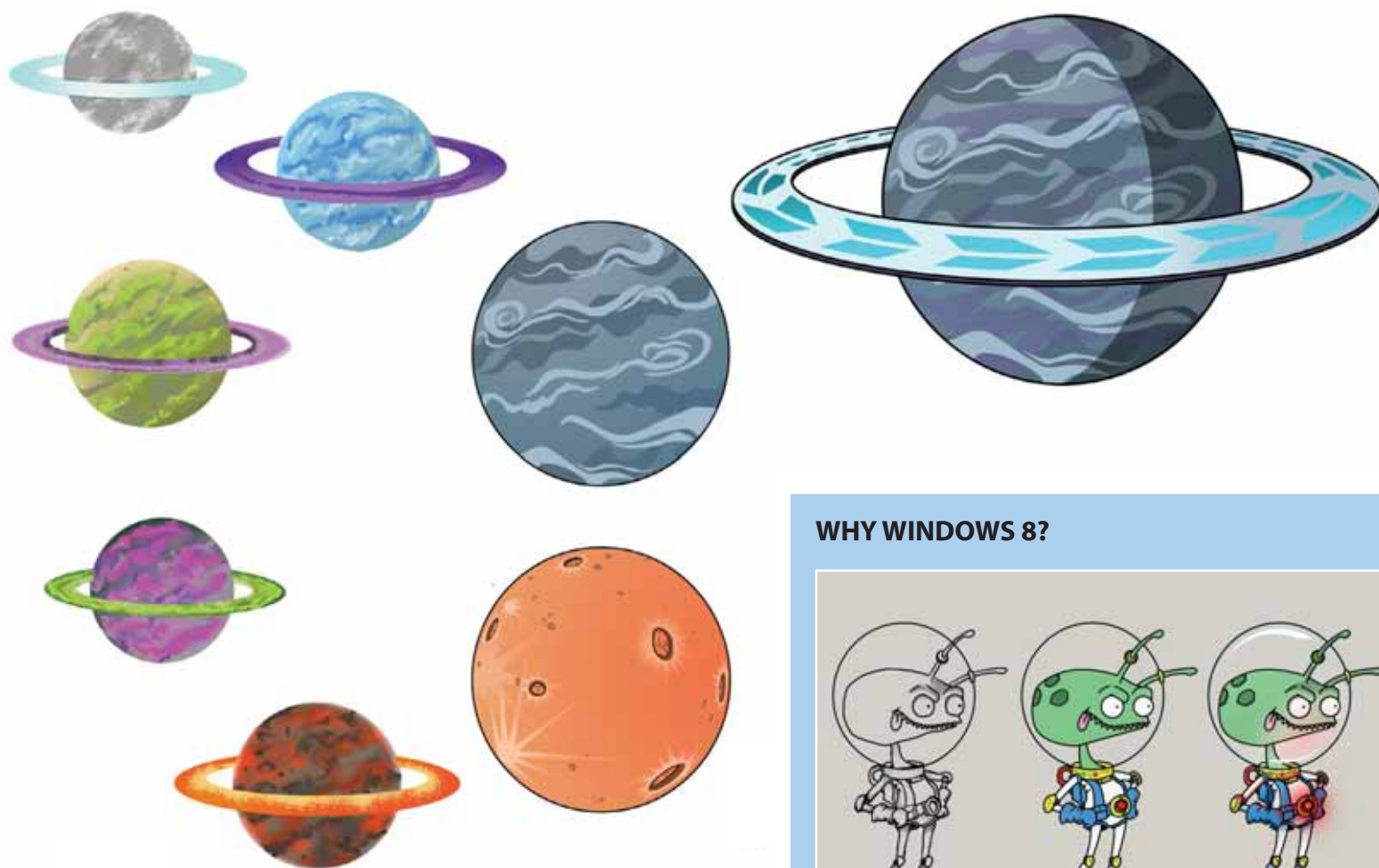
“I know we keep banging on about how great Microsoft have been, but we do feel totally independent,” suggests Thomas. “It never feels like I work for Microsoft or anything like that. They are there to help us, but we’re making the game and it’s our game, nobody else’s.”

“Being honest, it does feel odd feeling this way about Microsoft, but they’re great, and there’s no publishing deal signed,” adds Grand-Scrutton. “They don’t set us milestones and there’s no demands. It was enough for them that they liked us, liked our game idea, and then when I sent them some artwork, they loved that too. This will sound daft, but they’ve kind of been like a lovely, encouraging older brother. It’s just a brother who happens to know all the right people.”

It’s rare to hear Microsoft described in such terms, but it seems, based on Dlada’s experience at least, the company has a grounded understanding of how to support and work with indies. That, of course, serves not only to help small teams, but gives Microsoft great games for their platform.

Grand-Scrutton and Thomas don’t shy away from being open about their struggles with Windows 8 either. They’re clearly smitten by the platform, but their first days tinkering with Windows 8 development were trying.

“Early on it was tough,” admits Grand-Scrutton. “In the pre-release version of Windows 8 there were a lot of stability issues, and that was tough. But it’s now on a far



more stable version, so that's no longer a problem. Now I'm running Windows 8 as my main OS and everything's fine.

"Before that I wasn't, because I wasn't quite confident and had a virtual machine running it, and it was a scary process. Things would crash and wipe. But they released a new version in mid-August, and everything's improved an enormous amount. It's a brilliantly stable platform."

“In a business like the games industry, you have to encourage free thinking and listen to people's ideas.”

Craig Thomas, Dlala

A TESTING TIME

All the help from Microsoft, though, doesn't mean Dlala has grown arrogant. Quite the opposite is true, and they're refreshingly frank about how intimidating the experience is. Despite both working at Jagex and later on Bossa's BAFTA-winning *Monstermind*, suddenly being charged with managing and directing a project has been a testing process.

"It is scary sometimes," reveals Grand-Scrutton. "We're not sitting coding anymore. We've taken a step back, and we're having to put a lot of faith in these guys working across the internet."

Physical meetings do take place, though, albeit in the CCO's parent's garage.

"It's a step up," quips Grand-Scrutton.

"I used to make games in my parent's living room. We're really going places."

Now Dlala is starting to look at working with investors. To date the directors have never taken out any loans, as they agreed they didn't want to start out by owing money. If Dlala does go the investor route, they insist it has to be somebody who loves what we're doing as much as they do.

"Everyone has to be part of the team or not at all. It's the same for everybody, and we're all equal. We're really see the freelancers we're using as very much part of the team," says Grand-Scrutton, moving on to company culture. "They can contribute ideas the same as we can as the founders. We're both big on creativity, but there's only two of us. And we've worked together for years; you can get a little lost in that, so it's good to have outside input. We're very open to that."

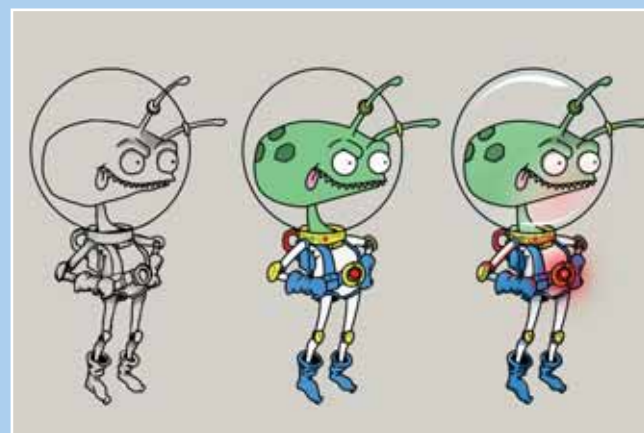
And the pair insist they owe much of their sense of what is important to a studio's internal culture to their tie at Bossa.

"In a business like the games industry, you have to encourage freethinking and listen to people's ideas," states Thomas. "Trying to stifle individual's coming up with ideas, and trying to restrict freethinking would be a bad idea. That's something we've learned from where we've been before; it's a way of thinking we've inherited, and we're lucky to have done so."

"We don't know that we're going to be the next big thing," concludes Grand-Scrutton. "All we know is we have no money and a game idea we love. Now it's time to find out if this is all going to work out." ■

www.dlalastudios.com

WHY WINDOWS 8?



THE REASONS DLALA picked the Windows 8 platforms as the hosts for its debut game are many, but the first is simple.

In an earlier time creating games for his own pleasure, studio chief technical officer Craig Thomas created a number of personal projects for various Microsoft phones and the Xbox 360, building up what he admits is a 'sentimental attachment' to the hardware.

Thus attracted to Windows 8, it quickly became apparent to Dlala that the new marketplace would also offer a fledgling studio a reasonable chance to tackle the perennial discoverability challenge.

"The Android market and the iOS market are both flooded right now, and with a lot of great games," explains Dlala chief creative officer AJ Grand-Scrutton.

"The problem is the 'a lot' bit. Trying to be a little fish going into that pond is hard, even if we think what we are making is a really great game equal to the best in there. We'd be competing against companies that are very well established, have tonnes of marketing budget at their fingertips, and can stand out against that huge number of games."

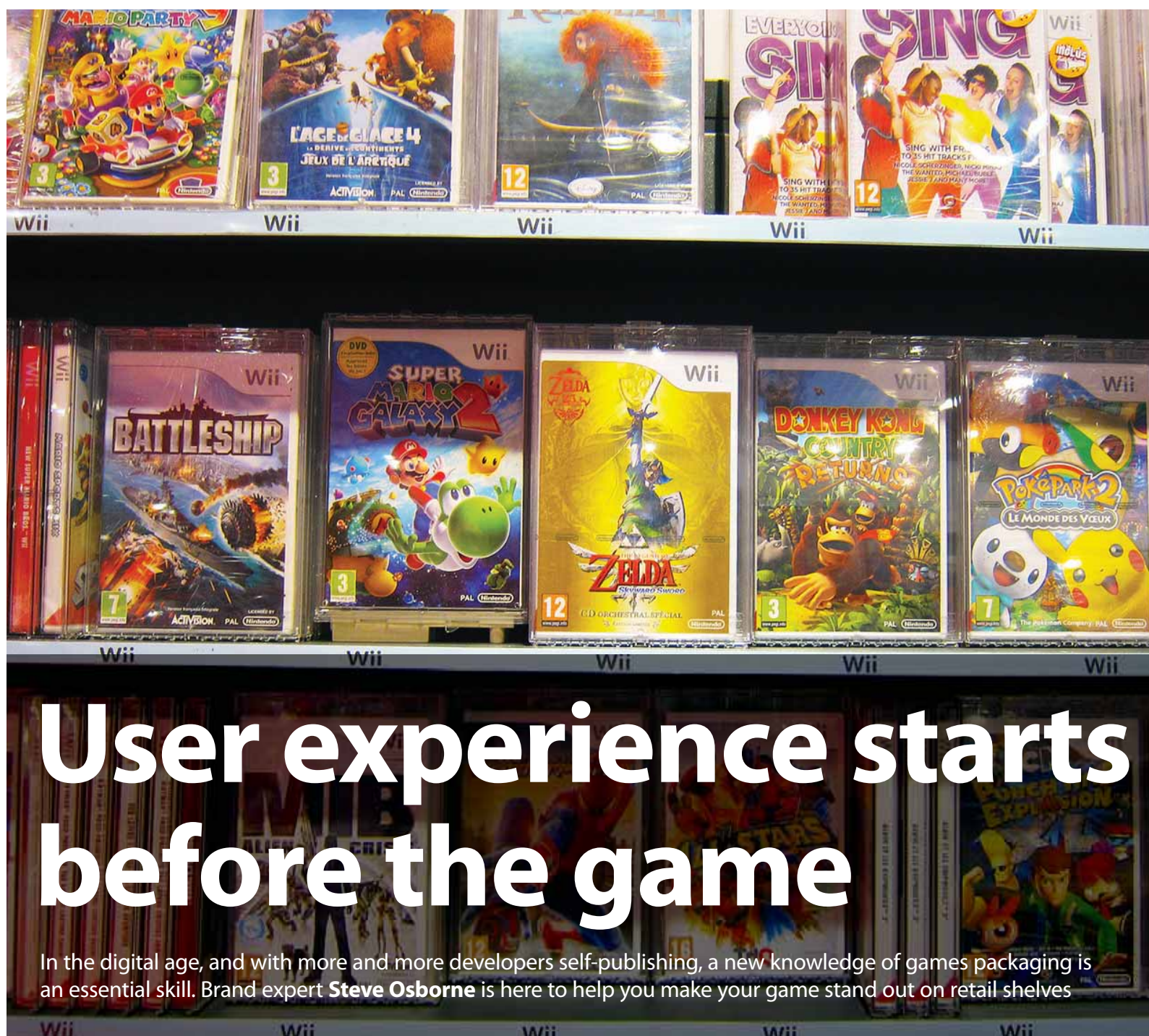
Windows 8, however, is a new platform; a level playing field where true indies like Dlala can, it believes, have a chance against the biggest fish.

"I don't think there'll be many thousands of games there by Christmas," Grand-Scrutton predicts. "They'll probably be hundreds, and if we're one of them, we have a chance. As a new company, a new platform is a great opportunity."

Dlala believes that, based on current numbers, regardless of its position on any lists its game should be within two or three scrolls of the Windows 8 store's home screen; a prospect clearly more alluring than joining the seemingly infinite game lists on the likes of Apple's marketplace.

"We're essentially building one game, and Windows 8 handles the scaling of that game across PC monitors, tablets and phones," adds Grand-Scrutton. "That's a huge deal for a studio like ours, because building a nice scaling system can be a right ball-ache."

Thomas also makes clear that the fact Windows 8 makes no demands that developers are tied into a single programming language played a significant part in Dlala's choice to work with the platform.



User experience starts before the game

In the digital age, and with more and more developers self-publishing, a new knowledge of games packaging is an essential skill. Brand expert **Steve Osborne** is here to help you make your game stand out on retail shelves

Video games are fighting for attention against cut-price DVDs and other media in the retail space

IT WAS NEWS about the shift taking place in the games industry that pricked my interest. Games sales in the US were down 42 per cent in April 2012 compared with the same month in 2011, according to the *LA Times*.

The reason, apparently, is the explosive growth of social gaming, mostly being played on smartphones and tablets.

So will the industry follow the same path as the record industry and become dominated by downloads? Already there are signs in the High Street, with UK retailer Game seemingly heading the way of HMV – a vastly reduced number of stores for technophobic laggards who still prefer to hold their purchases in their hands. Like me for instance, but hey, I've been known to buy the CD of an album I've already downloaded – and paid for.

Actually, technophobia isn't the reason at all, it's the added value that packaging brings to the experience of consuming the product. And if there is to be a, albeit smaller, market for retailing games in the future, then a focus on their packaging is overdue.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

In my day job for the last 20 years, designing packaging for slightly more tangible products – like biscuits, yogurt and beer – it has long been known that people don't consciously distinguish the packaging from its product. We buy a can of deodorant, a bottle of beer and a packet of crisps.

This is fairly obvious, but it hides a near magical trick that packaging performs every day without even trying. The attributes of the packaging – for example, smoothness, elegance, naturalness and so on – become transferred to the experience of the product, and the brand. So, for instance, Evian's unique pale blue plastic bottle, translucent cap and pink mountain landscape makes the water look, and taste, colder than other brands – told you it was magic.

Called 'sensation transference', the effect was first identified by Louis Cheskin in the 1940s. It is the principle behind the familiar 'blind versus branded' taste test, where consumer preference for a product switches

depending on whether they see the packaging or not.

In one of the most famous examples, the taste of Pepsi was preferred to that of Coke 'blind', but the opposite was true when drunk from the packaging. This and many other examples show conclusively that we taste the brand just as much as the actual product. And packaging is part of both.

In gaming terms, you could say that the packaging becomes part of the user experience itself.

But in the relentless digitisation of music, video, books and now games, this role of packaging risks being lost.

THE LOST WORLD

The first computer games were fairly crude by today's standards, but many that are regarded as classics by fans enhanced their UX through handsome bookshelf-boxes that contained books and other thoughtful add-ins. Nowadays, the UX is delivered by film-quality graphics, force feedback,



rumble technology and even instructions delivered in-game. As a consequence, packaging for games is often indistinguishable from CD music or DVD movie counterparts.

Interestingly, record shops are starting to emphasise the more tangible aspect of buying music, and have even brought back a form of packaging that predates the CD: the vinyl record. While I haven't yet witnessed the parallel trend of a row of record decks in Dixons, these – often young – consumers must be playing their records on something. And buying them for a reason.

So what does all this mean for games packaging? With a design budget of millions, and even their own music score for many of the biggest titles, is it good enough to package them in a plastic box that's identical to the one across the aisle for ten-year-old movies at two-for-a-tenner? I don't think so.

Graphically, there's no shortage of dramatic 'key visuals' available from games themselves, but a key visual does not make a brand. Those goblins, busty heroines, steroidal maniacs and GIs do tend to blend into one another after a while.

Back in the supermarket, Evian manages to differentiate itself from a lot of eager competitors who also want to be the most refreshing water available. This requires two things: working out the unique brand story; and strategic design skills to translate this into desirable, standout design codes.

These work on a 2D and 3D level, and include codes for far more than the product. Evian might be a refreshing water, but it's also French, alpine, sporty, and a bit cosmetic.

EVERY PACKET TELLS A STORY

By the same process, most games promise energy, excitement and adventure, so that's what we see on the packaging. But what

differentiates your brand to be worthy of the name is something at a higher level, and it's this that the packaging design should be aiming for.

Differentiation and brand values can be delivered in one big hit with a strong character, and so it's not surprising that both movies and games use these leading assets, often to excellent effect. When your characters are not well-known or new, then branding and packaging needs to work a lot harder to help tell the story.

“ I was intrigued to see Skylanders in the shop window the other day, using packaging to good effect to tell a bigger story. ”

Steve Osborne, Osborne Pike

An interesting development in gaming is the opportunity to merge the virtual, and screen-based with the real and tangible. Nintendo's Wii was the real groundbreaker here, but it's a sign of the blistering pace of technological change that the brand feels like an early pioneer, not really cutting-edge.

However, I was intrigued to see the *Skylanders* game in the shop window the other day, using packaging to good effect to tell a bigger story. Good, but far from great: I can see it's a blend of digital with some good old-fashioned plastic toy characters, thanks to the windows in the box and some strategically placed character packs. But the reassurance of the Wii and PS3 brands are hard to spot, as is the point of the game, assuming seven-year-olds need one.

I'm sure this is all explained in the TV ad or even by reading the box, but the best packaging doesn't need that much commitment to convey its product.

Another development in the supermarket owes a lot to the gaming world – digital enhancements built into packaging to enhance the brand experience.

It was over three years ago when LEGO pioneered augmented reality technology to allow shoppers to see a fully-constructed toy as a 3D image outside the packaging at the point of sale, and things have moved on considerably since then.

For example, Red Bull-drinkers could collect cans and line them up to create a racing track. Using an iPhone to photograph the front of the cans for calibration, an app generated a virtual version of the track, which could then be raced with a virtual car. The more cans, the more fun the track design.

Suremen deodorant recently created a pack-based campaign in which cans become game controllers to help players face a range of adventurous challenges from mountain-biking to water-skiing, all in a bid to win cash prizes or sports gear.

Clearly, there are great opportunities for the games market to use some of these exciting digital and physical enhancements in its own packaging. But before it does I would suggest that it could learn a lot from the basic packaging principles that are second nature in the supermarket: brand differentiation, information hierarchy and sensation transference, all wrapped up in a great story. ■

Steve Osborne has been impressed by Activision's Skylanders packaging (above)



Steve Osborne is a partner at the Osborne Pike: Branding and Packaging Consultancy, and is an expert in brand design strategy and execution, concept writing, brand hierarchy and brand archotyping.
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Come West

Famed for a relaxed pace of life and a diverse creative culture, the UK's South West is an appealing destination for those in games development. **Will Freeman** investigates the region's appeal



Top-to-bottom:
Ben Templeton of
Thought Den and Will
Luton, games consultant
and mobile developer

IT'S LITTLE SURPRISE that the UK's South West region is popular with tourists.

The scenery is beautiful, the locals' disposition is notoriously friendly, and, while the rest of the UK is famed for grey skies, counties like Devon, Cornwall and Gloucestershire enjoy ample attention from the sun. Scattered with surfing hotspots and serving as a hub for a variety of countercultural movements, the South West is also hugely popular with young adults looking to escape big city life.

But the very elements that make the area so admired by vacationers have also permeated a myth that the South West is some kind of idyllic rural wasteland, where jobs are few and the challenges for businesses are many.

For that reason it may surprise some – including those who have been on holiday there – to find out that the South West's games industry is sizeable.

"Over the last few years Bristol and the South West has been a bit of a secret compared to locations more traditionally associated with games development," suggests James Parker, design director at

multiplatform and multiscreen specialist Opposable Games. His studio's home in the city of Bristol, the region's most populous urban sprawl, puts the Opposable team in a hub awash with creative start-ups where, like the rest of the area, there's plenty of good reasons to set up shop.

The South West has hosted quite a few console studios in the past, but generally the focus here has been on mobile or web developers.

Armin Elsaesser, Fluffy Logic

Studio space is apparently up to six or seven times cheaper in the South West than in Central London. The UK capital is closer to Bristol than many of the UK's northerly hubs. Space is plentiful across the area, and the same things that delight tourists are perfect for developers with families.

FROM SMALL ACORNS

As a result smaller studios and start-ups have sprung up in the area in droves, as Ella Romanos, CEO of Plymouth studio Remode, and a key figure in organising the ExPlay video games festival, explains.

"It's definitely dominated by smaller studios," she says of the area. "There are lots of small indies and microstudios. These are outfits that have mainly sprung up in recent years to take advantage of changes in the industry, so we're talking mobile and online output mainly."

Romanos goes on to highlight that while most of the local games companies are small at present, most are growing, and with the wider changes in the industry it is only a matter of time before the region's games sector becomes more substantial.

Meanwhile, as Armin Elsaesser, producer at Bristol's Fluffy Logic points out, console-focused studios have less of a hold in the area nowadays.

"Although the South West has hosted quite a few console and triple-A studios in the past, generally the focus here has been on new media with smaller mobile and web



INSIDE EXPLAY



MEETING A DEVELOPER in the South West that doesn't sing the praises of the ExPlay festival is a rare thing.

ExPlay itself combines game jam and boot camp elements with a central conference that both celebrates and highlights the region's games making industry.

Established by studios Remode and Mutant Labs along with trade body Designed in Devon, and created with input from numerous local developers, the event is a case in point that demonstrates the reality of collaboration in the region. "We set up ExPlay to bring together people who work in, or aspire to work in, games," explains Remode CEO Ella Romanos. "We knew that there were quite a lot of people around, but people didn't really know each other, or communicate regularly – we didn't realise the extent of how

many people there were, or the passion and interest in building the community that people would have."

ExPlay's founding team hoped that ExPlay would not only build a community, but could highlight the importance of the industry to the local area, while playing a substantial part in helping to grow the industry by encouraging people to work together, while simultaneously encouraging talent to stay in the area and attract more of it.

"We initially founded ExPlay in Plymouth in 2010, but wanted it to bring people together across the whole of South West, so in 2011 it was extended to Bristol as well, and now the two cities interact and often compete in game jams."

The main ExPlay conference will take place at the Roman Baths and Bath Assembly Rooms in Bath from November 1st to 2nd this year.

www.explay.co.uk

developers. Fluffy Logic is currently one of the few console games companies based in the South West, which seems a real shame."

While Elsaesser makes clear Fluffy Logic would enjoy a little competition in the console space, he also sees that established publishers' current fascination with mobile could bring the gaming giants to the area.

"Before long [publishers] will be as visible and involved in mobile as they are in other, more established areas, and whilst self-publishing has its benefits, there is also a lot to be said for involving established publishers," he says.

Another strength of the area is in the realm of work for hire, says games consultant, former Mobile Pie team member and Bristol-based *Develop* columnist Will Luton.

"There's a lot of service work in web and mobile," he states. "Bristol has always had a great digital media scene, but it's been around work for hire, so I think that kind of trickles down to the games start-ups."

Luton also suggests that, because the South West doesn't have a very aggressive investment culture, numerous companies are particularly lean and boot-strapped, which

makes own IP a difficult option and service work, such as working on established brands or filling outsourcing roles in art or other areas, the more stable business plan.

“Bristol has always had a great digital media scene, but it's been around work for hire, so that trickles down to games start-ups.”

Will Luton, games consultant

TOGETHER AS ONE

Another strength in the region, and one evident in collective efforts like the ExPlay games festival (see panel, this page) is the community shared between studios in the South West.

"We've always found the Bristol community to be very focused on collaboration," insists Ben Templeton, co-founder of educational gaming outfit Thought Den. "There isn't

anywhere near as much rivalry between studios as I've noticed in London. It can be quite incestuous at times, but often this means the bar is constantly being raised because the knowledge and skills are being shared among the community."

And a sense of togetherness proliferates across the region. Romanos' role as curator of ExPlay puts her at the very centre of this development community.

"ExPlay is the main driver for that community, but the companies in the area all know each other and often work with each other, so it's something that we're active with," she explains. "ExPlay has monthly meet-ups in Plymouth and Bristol as well as game jams and the yearly conference, so we meet a lot of people through those."

And that community is anything but a clique. This year's ExPlay Game Jam is taking place in both Bristol and London, offering a chance for the South West community to mix further afield.

A natural extension to a games industry community is collaboration; a practice sometimes hampered by the necessity of embargoes and secrecy. Yet despite such



Top-to-bottom:
Alex Ryley of Mutant Labs
and Armin Elsaesser
of Fluffy Logic



Top-to-bottom:
Dan Livingstone of
Interactive Systems
Studio, Dan Efergan of
Aardman Digital,
Ella Romanos of Remode,
Oli Christie of Neon Play
and Richard Wilson of
Mobile Pie



Neon Play's Flick Football on
iPhone has been a hit with
UK and US players

► concerns, studios in the South West have plenty of experience of working as one.

"There is a lot of motivation for companies meeting up, sharing ideas and knowledge and collaborating on projects," states Alex Ryley, MD of Plymouth-based 2D specialist Mutant Labs, which co-founded ExPlay with Remode. "There always seems to be a party, a game jam or a developer meet up going on, helping the community get together."

Some, however, argue that too much emphasis on regional community can project a parochial image on a global stage.

"There are others in Bristol and the South West of course, but we are competing on a global basis, so don't feel hugely 'regional' and don't want to be perceived as such," says Oli Christie, CEO of mobile developer Neon Play, based in the Gloucester countryside. "We don't apologise for being a regional, even rural developer; we just happen to be here with a great team making incredible games that have done pretty well."

DEV-IT-YOURSELF

Aside from the merits of the South West's development community, aided by its game jams and get-togethers, there's also a broader regional trend from beyond the games industry that has seen local studios foster a powerful sense of individuality.

"The South West has a strong independent spirit to it – we're often overlooked by London and the other major areas of the country so it's tended to develop a 'do-it-yourself' attitude," offers Mobile Pie founder Richard Wilson. "A result of this is that we've seen a big growth in the number of freelancers and microstudios in the area. A lot of the microstudios take on commissioned work – I suspect as a way to maintain financial independence for their own games."

And, of course, there's the aforementioned and renowned quality of life.

"The fantastic lifestyle offered by the surrounding area combined with good transportation routes into London tempted us to open our office here," explains Mike Hawkyard, new business director of Bournemouth casual studio 4T2. "It originally helped that very few of our clients visited our office – we'd go and see them – so it made little difference where we were physically located. These days more of the clients do make the journey, with a high percentage staying over for the weekend."

"We don't apologise for being a regional developer; we just happen to be here with a great team making incredible games."

Oli Christie, Neon Play

BRINGING THE TALENT

Of course, to paint a completely rosy picture of the South West would be unrealistic as, like many games development hubs, the region has challenges to tackle; mainly on the issue of recruitment.

"Before the recession Bristol was full of talent, but we're finding it harder and harder to make decent hires," admits Thought Den's Templeton. "This is largely because the industry is becoming more competitive and talent is costing more and more."

Along with others from the region, Templeton suggests a locally-focused online portal for the South West may serve as something of a solution.

Luton, meanwhile, has a different angle on the recruitment issue.

"We need more mature talent, especially in the creative and business side," he says.

"There's a little bit of naivety in these areas, I think. That will come with the maturing of the companies and increased turnovers than can attract it too."

And it's not only humble indies that face the recruitment challenge in the area. Dan Efergan is creative director at the digital wing of iconic *Wallace and Gromit* animator – and now games developer – Aardman, which has been based in the South West since 1972.

"It's pretty hard," concedes Efergan. "We have a pretty good ability to pull in good people. Aardman comes with the benefit of being a household name but even so it can be hard to get people to commit."

"We try and work with the best from across the nation, and that means people working at Aardman are making a lifestyle decision, to move to Bristol, on top of a career decision."

Remode's Romanos, however, is upbeat about the recruitment challenge, pointing to that aforesaid quality of life as a strong pull for those looking for work outside of London.

"I think it is fairly easy to attract talent," she insists. "We tend to find that people either love or hate the idea of living here – if you like the outdoors or have a family, then it can be a great place to live. If you want an urban lifestyle then it's probably not for you."

DEPARTED GIANTS

Aside from challenges around recruitment, some feel the departure of the traditional large-scale studios from the region has left the South West lacking a special something.

"Gone are the days when you had triple-A studios like Psygnosis in Stroud, Acclaim in Cheltenham, Hot House in Bristol and Microprose," states Neon Play's Christie. "But there are a handful of games developers doing good things and hopefully that will encourage more indie studios to grow here."



Top-to-bottom:
James Parker of
Opposable Games and
Mike Hawkyard of 4T2
Left: Interactive Systems
Studio's in-house
prototype built with Unity

The final challenge, some feel, is a matter of education. Despite the likes the University of Plymouth building a strong reputation in the games space for its courses, locally trained talent, and attracting those from further afield to study in the area, remains tough considering the geographical size of the territory.

"Although some of the colleges such as the University of the West of England have started offering courses in computer games development, with links to placements, which have proved useful as we often take on placement students and up-skill them with real world industry experience, it is still hard to attract talent to the South West," adds Fluffy Logic's Elsaesser.

Fortunately, however, the South West has made good inroads in its presence on the wider UK games development stage, attracting the attention of national trade bodies and global business partners.

"I am on the TIGA board alongside Ella Romanos and Oli Christie, so the South West is well represented there," says 42T's Hawkyard. "The UKTI have been very helpful in helping 4T2 visit, exhibit and network overseas. They also organised a well-attended event for the creative sector to coincide with the Olympic sailing in Weymouth recently. Creative England is also active in the area."

LOOKING FORWARD

Despite the challenges facing the area, optimism abounds, and according to Dan Livingstone, founder of Interactive Systems Studio and course leader of the University of Plymouth's BSc in computing and games design, some of those who have moved away from the area are now returning.

"There is an interesting cycle here; experienced developers are returning to the region after years in the sector," suggests Livingstone. "Start ups are increasingly

staying in the region – a decade ago a new team would migrate to London, five years ago to Bristol. More recently these teams have had the confidence to stay even more local to build their studios."

The last word, however, goes to Mutant Labs Ryley, who offers an enthusiastic prediction of the future of the games business in the region.

“A decade ago a new team would migrate to London. More recently these teams have had the confidence to stay even more local.”

Dan Livingstone,
Interactive Systems Studio

"I'm very optimistic about its future," says Ryley. "There seem to be more initiatives for funding in the region to support games companies, and trade bodies such as TIGA have been forging strong ties down here. It's great to have organisations like TIGA taking a stand on a national level for the industry, and lobbying government to help improve the general environment for games companies in the UK."

"The main challenge is making sure that the local authorities capitalise on the interest in the region being shown by national government and regional trade bodies."

If that problem can be solved, things look good for the South West's on going rise to prominence. Every day the area's impact on the games business increases, and at the going rate, in another five years it could emerge as a global bastion of the new era of mobile and social development. ■

DEEP THOUGHTS



Each and every studio detailed in this feature deserves special attention, but it is Bournemouth-based browser and smart device casual outfit 4T2 that we have plucked as an example of the kind of studio that prospers in the South West.

With a wealth of experience behind it on work for hire projects with clients including LEGO, TT Games and the BBC, 4T2 shines in a speciality many in the South West have mastered. So much so that it has built the confidence to begin work on its first licensed title.

Spun out from a Bournemouth University course, 4T2 has enjoyed great success, with its game

LEGO Hero Factory winning the 2012 New Media Age Award, and its full catalogue of games based on the construction toys totting up some 375 million play sessions to date.

"I'm not convinced being based in the South West is responsible for this specifically – we've just worked hard at attracting some highly talented staff and great projects," says Mike Hawkyard, the studio's new business director.

"However, our staff retention levels are very good due to the lifestyle benefits and accompanying company ethos. Stable teams have got to be tremendous bonus in any line of work."

www.4t2.co.uk



WARNING

WORKING FOR 4T2 WILL DAMAGE YOUR HEALTH!

Side effects include:

- ◆ **Overwhelming nausea** from the smell of fresh sea air - for acute withdrawal symptoms we can provide packets of stale city smog
- ◆ **LEGO® build burnout syndrome** – the large scale *Star Wars* models are particularly stressful: so much battleship grey
- ◆ **Awkward moments of physical intimacy** with celebrities at award ceremonies. Generally just hugs and handshakes but you never know

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HERO FACTORY

Unite 12
round-up
p34



Hip to be square?

Games design icon Peter Molyneux on why he picked Unity to make Curiosity: What's Inside the Box? p32

User
interface
design
p38



OptiTrack's
new mo-cap
camera range
p43





Box clever

Now the head of a spirited start-up, Peter Molyneux has picked Unity to make his game *Curiosity: What's Inside the Cube*. **Will Freeman** caught up with the development icon last month at the Unite conference to find out why he's picked the tech

On stage at the Unite conference, Peter Molyneux told the audience he has enjoyed working without masters

THE UNITE CONFERENCE brings together the users and creators of the Unity games engine. This year, one of the tech's latest converts took to the stage to deliver a keynote on his game *Curiosity: What's Inside the Cube*.

His name is, of course, Peter Molyneux, and he's a man who seems infatuated by a game engine that a few years previously was largely the realm of hobbyist and microstudio developers. *Develop* caught up with him immediately after he concluded his keynote.

What made you choose to work with Unity when you started work on *Curiosity*?

For me, the whole point was how quickly I could get started by choosing Unity. Literally, I left Lionhead, strolled the 274 steps up the road to 22Cans's office, which had opened the day before.

I walked in, sat down, and like a nine-year-old with a game idea, I wanted to do everything straight away. So there and then I installed Unity and, for the first time in some time, I was tucking into the actual process of making a game. I was coding.

And Unity is very impressive from the start of using it. I was amazed by how quickly it let me play around with stuff, and without any artists and a couple of programmers. That's just what you need when you're playing around with new ideas and need to be able to iterate very quickly.

Without that ability, it's insane. When we started Lionhead we had the idea for *Black and White*, and it took us six months before any single element was seen on screen.

In that context, working with Unity must be really refreshing on a personal level.

Absolutely. Using Unity is a nirvana. And as well as being nirvana, it also led to the realisation that, as much as I want to be a cigarette-smoking, Coca-Cola-drinking, 20-hours-a-day-programmer, I now know I'm not intelligent enough. That's the honest truth.

“ Publishers can't allow unbridled creativity, because us creatives would run off into the sunset spending all the money. ”

Peter Molyneux, 22Cans

But you talked on stage at Unite about how Unity does make 'everyone a games developer'. And you suggested that will change the types of games we see made. What do you think the change will be?

I think that the games being made today really are starting to properly engage with their communities as they are made. In the industry, we've spoken before about engaging with communities for something like ten years now. But for most that just meant having a discussion board and a website that would be ignored most of the time, and have just a few posts picked out.

Now it's different, because we're engaging in a mass social space, and there you're being hit by input all the time.

Even just now, I've been hit on Twitter about *Curiosity: What's Inside the Cube*. 'I don't get the cube. I don't get why you'd want to do that.' That kind of input is incredibly useful stuff, and it now comes in before you've even finished your game.

The democratisation process that Unity has extends to the point where the masses offer a huge motivation for me. You have to not be frightened to use that information, and believe me, it is so tempting to bury your head in the sand. In fact, being honest, sometimes I'd love to put my head back behind the Microsoft sandbags and just go into my ivory tower. But those days are gone.

And the way games are released now, especially on some of the platforms Unity is famous for, it's just another day of development. If you release on a Monday, on the Tuesday you're developing again.

So now you're out of your ivory tower and working with Unity. You described during your Unite keynote the feeling of 'working without masters'. Is that the only way a game like *Curiosity* could have emerged?

Well, part of the problem is that any big developer – or any big publisher – has to have process. They can't allow unbridled creativity, because if they did us creatives would run off into the sunset spending all the money. There has to be process, be it through greenlighting, concept approval practices or



something similar. But, that process does hamper creativity.

There's no way that you could stand up and say, 'I've got two people in the office, and within four months I'm going to be releasing a game that's going to be completely different'. At a big organisation you'd need that long just to get the concept approved.

For me, at a smaller studio and working with Unity, there's a nimbleness and swiftness to being a start-up that can lead to a game like *Curiosity*. In that setting there's an insane amount of that 'just do it' mentality.

What about the idea that technical limitations can stoke the creative process? You've said recently that *Populous* might not of existed in a post-Unity world.

Well, if you have to design around problems, then quite often, as with *Populous* and its raising and lowering of land, many things were just work arounds. That is creativity; trying to approach and navigate problems. But there's a whole host of new problems to keep us creative, and there's plenty more to come, and plenty of opportunities.

When you can properly take an iPad and mirror it to your big screen, and you've got two screens, that's an insane design problem. There's analytics too. That isn't a solved problem. We're only at the start of things there, because we're only using analytics at the moment to motivate people to spend more money. That's not going to last long if we continue. We need to start using analytics to keep people engaged.

“ I'll be honest, it's truly terrifying being a start-up, I literally didn't sleep last night as I was so nervous about things. ”

Peter Molyneux, 22Cans

Moving on, you talked in your keynote about the strength of having a single vision for your game. What did you mean by that?

It's this simple. I've got an idea. It's for an experience, and it mixes together a lot of other stuff that I've had experience of and childishly dabbled with, but not yet got the real delight out of. And I'm hopeful this idea will be the most incredible thing I've ever worked on.

If you have an idea like that, you've got to sacrifice all the comfort blankets you have. If you've been blessed with one single idea, and have clear motivation to implement that idea, you have to go for it.

That's what led me to leave Microsoft and go with a start-up.

And I'll be honest, it's truly terrifying being a start-up. I can't even explain how terrifying it is. I literally didn't sleep last night as I was so nervous about things.

But there must be some pleasure in being in that position again; to have your own employees, your own studio and a completely new game to work on from scratch. What has that process been like?

Oh, yes. And, I mean, funding is a little easier when you have an established name and a good track record, but there's still that problem of bringing your team together. It's an insanely hard problem. My stomach turns at the thought that you could be bringing together people that may well end up hating each other, or it may become one of the greatest experiences ever.

These people aren't people I've worked with for 20 or so years. Nothing's tried and tested, so it is terrifying. And there's all these new people on the block; the likes of Gree and Zynga. There's relationships with Apple and Google to master. But, yes, it is a very exciting experience.

The big challenge is still establishing games. When Clive Sinclair released his computers, he said we could create the forth most important entertainment medium in the world. We failed. As developers, we started making content for ourselves, and we forgot about the rest of the world. We found ourselves servicing a narrower and narrower corridor of people.

Our opportunity now, is to take all this amazing, democratising technology, and present things to huge audiences, and show them how incredible being involved in entertainment can be. ■

www.22cans.com

Peter Molyneux's Curiosity is a puzzle game that challenges players' raw endurance



Together as one

The Unite conference lets Unity Technologies show attendees what it has been working on. **Will Freeman** was there, and a caught up with the company founders to talk the Asset Store, developer tools and platform decisions

Unity's Nicholas Francis, Joachim Ante and David Helgason (above, left-to-right)

EACH YEAR, THE Unity workforce and the most dedicated of its famously devoted user base gather as one for the Unite conference.

It's a place to exchange ideas, debate the future of the engine, and showcase the best Unity authored projects. Each year it is infamously friendly and grass-roots, but for Unite 2012, something has changed. There's still the hobbyists, the auteurs and the bedroom coders, but among the crowds the likes of Brian Fargo and Peter Molyneux (see *previous pages*) are strolling about, soaking up the atmosphere and sharing ideas.

Unity has rarely been shy about its vision of 'democratising games development' being an all encompassing one that targets triple-A industry icons and microstudios with equal enthusiasm. But never before has this democracy been more apparent than at Unite 12. There's more big name attendees, denser crowds, and, in general, everything in the event's sprawling Amsterdam site is slicker than at previous Unites.

"It's amazing how things have changed compared to a few years back," reflects Unity CEO David Helgason. "It still feels like that one community. We really did start as three guys in a basement, and now we look around an event like this and it's so badass to see

what it's become. But it is still the same show, and I think that's because of the people we work with at Unity. It's people that are passionate and the approach they have that have make this event what it is. And yes, it's got more professional over time, but it's the people – and our users and our people are pretty cool – that make this event."

“ In the same way we listen to our users about what platforms matter to them, our new features come from our users too. ”

Nicholas Francis, Unity

ASSETS 'R' US

It's easy to get carried away with the sentimentality that abounds at Unite. It is an event defined by positivity and enthusiasm. And yet it still serves a corporate purpose. Unite delivers a hearty serving of news, and allows the engine's makers to detail myriad updates and features crafted in the past year.

Of all the information to emerge from the show floor at Unite, the debut of the Unity Asset Store: Online Services marketplace is perhaps the most significant. The Online Services store serves as an accompaniment to the hugely successful Unity Asset Store, and will provide developers with a range of tools and plug-ins to publish games on the web or mobile via third-party services.

A number of providers, including Playhaven, InMobi, GamesAnalytics and Xsolla, are already on board to offer plug-ins and services for analytics, monetisation, payments, CRM and advertising.

"The market out there is really competitive, and we want Unity users to be successful, so we want to help them with all these things: analytics, CRM and so on are all important and useful," explains Helgason. "But they are also complex, and it's not the kind of thing you can fully understand in a weekend. It's even more complex when you realise how many companies there are, and there's a lot of hyperbole and potentially confusing information. We wanted to help developers work their way through all that."

"What it takes to make a game these days is changing", adds Unity's GUI designer, Editor coder and web designer Nicholas Francis.



Inside the main hall of Amsterdam's converted gasworks at Unite 2012

"We're a tools provider, so we have to help people make games, and that means changing what we offer. If analytics services have become part of games development, then we have to help there. And we want to remove the barriers to entry of those services."

THE MIGHTY ATOM

Elsewhere on the show floor at Unite, it emerged that Unity has secured a deal with Intel. The partnership will see games published through the engine outfit's Union distribution platform released for smartphones and tablets powered by the Atom processor.

The deal includes a number of Unity authored Android titles published on Google Play and other markets through Union, the games syndication business model that sees groups of games selected by the technology company pushed to various non-traditional platforms, such as set-top boxes.

And the logic behind the Atom agreement, argues Helgason, is simple.

"As with everything that we do, with this deal we want developers to have as many options for distribution as possible," said David Helgason. "It really is as simple as that."

Similarly, Unity also used Unite to announce that the engine will now support Windows 8 and Windows Phone 8, Microsoft's latest operating systems which are due to arrive this autumn. However, the senior team are quick to point out that they do not take a blunderbuss approach to choosing which platforms to target.

"We're not the kind of company that just jumps at every platform," Helgason tells *Develop*. "We really evaluate carefully, and we wait for interest from our users, because we're not here to service platform holders; we're here to service developers. There's been a lot of interest in Windows 8, so we moved to support it."

A GUI FEELING

Aside from news about wider services and new platforms, Unite also serves to deliver new information on more subtle – but potentially more impactful – updates to the engine's workings, most of which will be introduced with the yet-to-be-dated launch of Unity 4.0.

But the update that caused the most excitement among attendees at Unite was confirmation of a new GUI system.

"In the same way we listen to our users about what platforms matter to them, our new features come from our users too," explains Francis. "And I can tell you, they were very interested in a new GUI system. It's not all done yet, but it's looking really nice, and I honestly think it's one the best cross-platform GUI system ever made. I'm really happy about that".

The new system allows for greater degrees of flexibility, impressive 3D screen furniture, and a wealth of other new features previously missing from Unity's GUI offering.

Aside from the GUI, Unite also saw more of character animation tech Mechanim and details of the forthcoming DirectX 11 support, which both serve to aid Unity users targeting triple-A characters and visuals.

"With Mechanim, there's no equivalent out there that can do what we can now do," offers Unity's CTO Joachim Ante.

That, says Ante, means a new and increasingly sizeable wave of character-centric games are likely to be made by the Unity userbase.

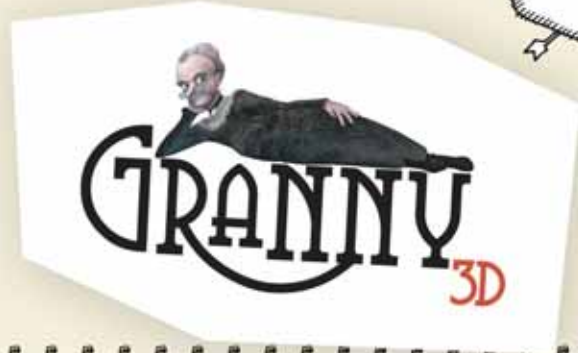
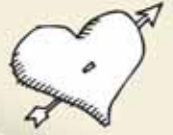
And, in combination with Mechanim, the power the DirectX 11 support introduces is making the forthcoming 4.0 release of Unity look like it may finally, and fully, bridge the gap between true triple-A and the hobbyist scene. Never before has the engine's title seemed so fitting. ■

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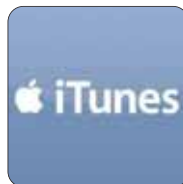
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Touch and go

From Kinect to tablet computers, there is now a myriad of ways to interact with games. **Aaron Lee** discovers what's next for the future of UI design and development



Top-to-bottom: Nick Atamas of Epic Games, Graham McAllister of Player Research

THERE ARE FEW elements that govern gameplay as resolutely as user interfaces. They are the frameworks which give users the means to interact with computer entertainment. Done right, they can elevate surprisingly simple games to the echelons of Top Ten lists and make the classics, years after their original release, feel as fresh as the day they first arrived.

But done wrong, and the reputation of a game can be irreparably damaged. No amount of beautiful character animations or bombastic weapon effects can stand up to a vocal group of players frustrated by patchy or uninspired UI implementation.

The influx of motion control technology on consoles has again put user interface and experience at the heart of game design and development challenges.

And it's not only new interfaces on consoles that developers must think about.

Touch-screen computers, such as smartphones and tablets, present a whole new frontier of learning to be undertaken by today's UI experts and game designers.

To get a sense of what the future holds for UI technology in games, *Develop* spoke to several UI tools specialists and developers about its strengths, challenges and trends.

One of the cofounding problems of user interface and user experience are the multiple definitions attached to them. For the purposes of this feature, we will be

approaching user interface and experience from the position of inputs and outputs and anything that a user has to do to interact with the system; be that at a hardware level with buttons, gesture or touch control; or software one with game menus, GUIs, HUDs, gameplay control, in-game videos tutorials and so forth.

“Many programmers think it is somehow beneath them, but ask them to design a simple UI on paper, they cannot do it.”

Nicholas Atamas, Epic Games

UI THEN AND NOW

Cast your mind back to the 1980s and the birth of home consoles. Then, games consoles, such as the NES and Master System, came with controllers that were limited to six buttons, which gave games designers a slim palette with which to build entire user experiences around.

Fast-forward to the present day, and user interface has become the main battleground for the hardware titans of the games business and the wider electronics industry.

Nintendo was the first to make serious gains with gesture-based interfaces with the launch of the Wii – the family-friendly console that sought to break down the barrier to entry caused by ‘overcomplicated’ gamepads.

The addition of Sony's PlayStation Move and Microsoft's Kinect has ensured that gesture control is here to stay. The latter had the news media convinced that the *Star Trek*-style Holodeck of the future was just around the corner for home entertainment.

Clearly, those predictions were a tad overzealous. Still, phenomenal progress has been made in UI design in recent times.

UI LITERATE

Kinect and other motion control devices represent a sizeable shift in how users interact with entertainment. But the hardware itself is only the beginning. Nicholas Atamas, a senior programmer at Epic Games, says the significance of UX must be accepted more widely among developers if we are to see advancements.

“The biggest challenge is user experience literacy,” he says. “Many games developers come into the industry saying, ‘I want to work on user-facing stuff’. When you ask them for specifics, you almost never hear excitement about building user experiences, traditional or otherwise. A counted few have immersed themselves in the wealth of really valuable UX information that is out there.



A future-themed menu interface, built using Scaleform

CUSTOM-MADE FOR CUSTOM MOVES



DANCE CENTRAL'S PLACE as the poster child for Kinect was assured the moment people took to the faux living room floor at E3 2010. The level of accuracy and finesse that was present throughout, from its instructional dance moves to the menu navigation, put it head and shoulders above the likes of *Just Dance* in the eyes of critics.

The man responsible for the gestural 'swipe' tech used in the *Dance Central* series is Ryan Challinor (inset), software developer at Harmonix Music Systems.

"At Harmonix, we haven't used any external UI solutions, we've hand-rolled all of our UI tech," he explains.

User interface design at the developer has evolved from the same systems it has been using for over a decade. And because it has served Harmonix so well, Challinor says it hasn't made sense to integrate something like Scaleform into its engine.

"One advantage of using our hand-rolled UI is that we understand it inside and out, so it allows us to more easily modify it to handle new situations, such as when we were developing the Kinect UI for *Dance Central*," he says.

"On the first *Dance Central*, when Kinect was super-new, we made an intentional effort to simplify the breadth of our UI as much as possible. We weren't sure how well users would be able to handle gestural control, and wanted as little friction as possible to get them into gameplay."

The current fragmentation of UI inputs and development tools may encourage some developers to follow a similar path to Harmonix and build their own custom UI technology for their project and target system.

Challinor has worked on UI at Harmonix for *Rock Band 3* and *The Beatles: Rock Band*.

"Never underestimate UI, it always ends up being a lot more complicated and having a lot more interesting problems to solve than you'd pick up at first glance, he says. "When I started at Harmonix and was assigned to start as a UI programmer, I was a bit disappointed to not be working on gameplay. I quickly learned that the crossover between game design and UI design is quite high, and the UI programmers have some of the most interesting and difficult design problems to solve."

"Many programmers think it is somehow beneath them, but when you ask them to design a simple UI on paper, they cannot do it. No amount of tech – short of an AI that designs the game's user experience for you – is going to overcome that."

The issue that Atamas raises about UX literacy is one reason why middleware tools facilitating the creation of user interfaces have become a necessity for many in the development community. Scaleform is one of the most popular solutions used in over one thousand products worldwide. Autodesk acquired it in 2011 for a reported \$36 million. Autodesk Gameware's senior manager of product marketing Greg Castle says he has witnessed the "increased adoption" of Scaleform as gesture and voice control grow in popularity.

The UI maker is a good barometer for where the wind is blowing in this often overlooked sector of games development. The job of UI tools providers has never been more important as developers hurry to find their feet with the latest user inputs.

EFFICIENCY FIRST

Naturally, one of the key expectations from middleware is the flexibility to handle a multitude of emerging user interfaces. Alas, multiplatform, multidiscipline UI tools cannot automatically solve all UI challenges, as Crytek senior programmer Dean Classen explains.

“One main challenge is managing all the specific code for each platform and developing it in a way that is flexible.”

Dean Classen, Crytek

"From the design side, to ensure a great interface on every platform and device, the ideal solution would be to design a completely unique UI for each. Unfortunately, the investment required to achieve that is usually not feasible so we need to find the best overlap and re-use as much as possible," offers Classen.

"From the programming side of things, one of the main challenges is managing all the specific code for each platform and developing it in a way that is flexible enough not to require a major change every time interface design changes – which happens all the time."

Knowing what you can achieve with the tools you have and the time afforded to you are the deciding factors. The way users interact with input devices, software menus and gameplay itself must be carefully and thoroughly considered.



Clockwise from top-left: Epic Games' *Infinity Blade II* on iPhone, a Unity HUD built with Scaleform, Madfinger's *Shadowgun* on iOS and Autodesk Gameware's *Starforce Battlement* demo

► Methods Crytek employ to keep its projects – and its clients' – up to date include providing a game library, the results from organised focus tests and third-party reviews of the current product it's working on. Obvious though it may sound, listening to user feedback about UI is something to take seriously, particularly those working on the newest forms of UI technology.

LIGHTS, CAMERA, INTERACTION

One of the problems that the emerging user interfaces, such as gesture and touch control, present is a lack of recognised standards.

It's taken developers years to master gamepad inputs. But over time controllers themselves have become more ergonomic and familiar control configurations have been adopted as cross-platform standards.

Experienced players are the audience most comfortable with these standards. They are used to gamepad inputs changing depending on genre, the context of the gameplay and the camera perspective they are experiencing it from.

Atamas agrees that familiar interfaces serve users' needs best.

"Sometimes the best UI is one that is really familiar to most people; it is built out of familiar components and it gets out of your way while subtly calling your attention to all

the right information," he says. "Incidentally, these are often the cheaper types of UIs to build well."

The differences between Kinect, Move and the Wii are broad enough to make the creation of universal UI standards seem somewhat laughable. And Autodesk's Castle stresses and another point that complicates the switch to gesture and touch interfaces.

If standards for motion and gesture controls were to exist, they must describe best possible methods for interaction.

Graham McAllister, Player Research

"The biggest challenge we see is adopting UI for various screen size and development platforms," says Castle. "The UI of a game on a TV with a controller versus a mobile with a touch screen is very different, and if you're going to build a framework on which to develop UI, it needs to have ever increasing variety and flexibility."

However, Player Research founder Graham McAllister believes the breaking standards should perhaps be encouraged when it comes to gameplay.

"If standards for motion and gesture controls were to exist, they must describe the best possible methods for interaction. To get there requires detailed analysis of not only controller interaction, but also people. Without these standards, studios may design less-than-perfect solutions which may cause repeating frustration, and push players away from the core game experience," he says.

U VISION

The challenges for gesture technologies are numerous, but in the grand scheme they are another step towards more seamless technology that is both ergonomic in design and better integrated into our lives.

For the immediate future, UI experts at Epic, Autodesk and Crytek are in agreement that one technology is emerging as the next phase of UI development.

"The most prominent emerging technology is wearable displays," offer Epic's Atamas. "The promise of a low-power, high-resolution, personalised display is going to make augmented reality very appealing. It will be really interesting to see the UI paradigms that emerge to support



Top-to-bottom:
Crytek's Dean Classen,
Jeremie Kletzkine of
PrimeSense and
Autodesk's Greg Castle.
A cinematic perspective
on IBII's gameplay (right)

augmented reality. I expect that in the not-too-distant future we will be able to view all our work and gaming on a single wearable display device. While the UI paradigms will be largely some evolution of existing ones, we are going to be spending even more time looking at UI."

Castle asserts that wearable technology will "cause a significant disruption in how we interact with gaming and technology at large". He adds: "It's early to identify exactly how this will manifest, but when games developers can register movements as inputs without a sensor you open up a whole new realm of possibilities for mobile gaming."

“Touch-less 3D interfaces were acclaimed as a huge revolution, but the magic that we saw didn't hide the limitation.”

Jeremie Kletzkine, PrimeSense

BRAIN CONTROL

Looking further into the future, another technology that is already being experimented with is brain control interfaces. NeuroSky and Emotiv are two of the companies that have produced headsets which read the user's concentration levels

and brainwaves and interpret them into inputs commands. Crytek senior programmer Classen sees this as the most exciting development along with head-tracking VR goggles, which have been implemented in racing titles and action games.

"They're getting more responsive and easier to integrate into small projects all the time," he says enthusiastically.

Brain control is still at a point where its impressive the technology even works, but the same can't be said for motion control.

"The introduction of touch-less 3D interfaces was acclaimed as a huge revolution, but the magic that we all saw in those technologies didn't hide the limitation forever," surmises Jeremie Kletzkine, business development manager at PrimeSense. "The lack of precision is a show-stopping restriction for many potential applications."

Plentiful are the avenues for UI. But Kletzkine's comments, and others here, are a reminder that the original promise of gesture control is still yet to be realised.

With the number of digital platforms still expanding, the consolidation of UI tools could indeed help developers, but equally there are those that feel pre-baked solutions and standardised control configurations will hamstring creativity.

Multi-touch, gesture control, brain control... the technology is evolving faster than people can become familiar with it.

UI will continue to fascinate and captivate, but, as Kletzkine says, the true challenge is in making the technology feel invisible. ■

UNITY: VISUAL BASICS



UNITY 4.0, THE latest version of the games development engine, will come with its own GUI editor, which uses a simple but effective click-and-drag interface – with no coding required.

The editor has been built from scratch to make it work as smooth as possible in Unity, says Nicholas Francis, GUI designer at Unity.

Buttons and icons can be constructed from several different elements. The editor allows you to animate each

individual element separately, selecting animations, sound, changing its state and so on. Even 3D icons can be created.

Once you've built your buttons you can position, resize and edit them there and then. It is also possible to control the render order of the buttons through a timeline display.

The editor comes with pre-set controls, such as thumbsticks for mobile games, but custom controls can, of course, be added.

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KEY RELEASE

Will Freeman looks at a new range of high-end motion-capture cameras

WHAT IS IT?

A new series of motion capture cameras designed for large volume, high-end use

COMPANY: OptiTrack

www.naturalpoint.com/optitrack



A Prime 41 camera keeping precise watch on mo-cap performers (main image), and OptiTrack CEO Jim Richardson (above)

AMONG THE motion-capture hardware providers, OptiTrack is memorable for its drive to democratise motion capture.

Having previously released cameras and supporting tech as suitable for an indie or prototyping studio as for an industry giant, now OptiTrack is taking its technological equality in the other direction.

Democracy, after all, is about involving everybody, and that means developers requiring top-of-the-range equipment for high volume capture spaces need some attention too.

PRIMED TO DELIVER

Which is why OptiTrack is now launching the Prime Series of cameras, each designed to meet the requirements of mo-cap's most demanding practitioners, apparently at a fraction of the cost of parallel solutions.

"Our unofficial motto is that mo-cap never should have been so expensive in the first place," reveals OptiTrack CEO Jim Richardson. "We are determined to completely turn this market on its head – the Prime Series is just the next step in the democratisation process. Entry-level systems were our bread and butter for years, and that's a market that we'll continue to serve as we move forward. But we've had our sights on the high-end for a while now.

"We firmly believe that triple-A developers deserve access to reasonable pricing just as much as our smallest indie client."

In fact, says Richardson, before the Prime Series' creation, high-end mo-cap customers were bound to the same inflated pricing that kept smaller studios out of the market. And OptiTrack is keen to change that. The Prime Series has been designed around a core concept of offering high precision of tracking, long-range capture, and a better yield of data in larger volumes. Furthermore, it's about liberating actors to perform free of restriction.

"The Prime Series is all about scalability, range, and precision," explains Richardson. "Practically, this means that mo-cap performers can explore huge volumes knowing that the system will capture every nuanced motion with high fidelity."

And, argues Richardson, it's not only the actors that are set to gain from using the new range of cameras.

“Prime 41s can easily track body, fingers, and props for multiple actors engaging in complex, meaningful interactions.”

Jim Richardson, OptiTrack

"Often there's a physicality and interactivity to game animations that can be challenging to keyframe. Prime 41s can easily track body, fingers, and props for multiple actors engaging in complex, meaningful interactions. This simplifies and expedites the animation process while producing data true to performance."

LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION

To accompany the new camera range, which has debuted with the currently available Prime 41 (see panel, right), OptiTrack is also finalising a new editing and take-management system on the software side, set to offer rapid data processing.

As for the evolution of the Prime Series from a single camera to a true range, OptiTrack is currently working on the Prime 17W, a super-wide FOV camera designed to maximise capture volume within slightly smaller setup areas. The 17W has been crafted for

customers that don't possess enough real estate to build out a complete Prime 41 system, but still require a high-fidelity capture.

"After that we'll continue to flesh out the Prime Series," concludes Richardson. "The goal is to have an OptiTrack camera that can perform any application and meet any budget." ■

INSIDE THE PRIME 41



The first released mo-cap camera of the Prime Series, the Prime 41, looks set to wow hardware fans with a taste for impressive specs.

Combining 4.1MP of processed pixels and 850 nm IR with a generous 51° FOV, 180 FPS capture rate and a vast camera-to-marker range, the hardware can track a 16mm mo-cap marker at 100 feet.

"In addition to the mo-cap essentials that our customers have come to expect – on-camera image processing, global shutter, external sync,

high-transmission lenses – we added several surprises," confirms OptiTrack CEO Jim Richardson. "Everything about the Prime 41 was designed to make clients say, 'I can't believe I've had to live with anything else'.

"Our Aim Assist technology enables simple, single-user aiming and calibration," offers Richardson by way of example. "One button press brings the camera view to full screen in the software, sets the image to grayscale, and optimises it for visibility."

EPIC DIARIES

Mark Rein and John Gaudiosi look at how Arkane Studios is reimagining first-person with Dishonored



UE3 enabled Arkane Studios to blend a mixture of gameplay styles to bring the moody, open world of Dishonored to life

ARKANE STUDIOS HAS been utilising Unreal Engine 3 (UE3) to let its imagination run wild in crafting a world that looks unlike any game ever seen before. *Dishonored*, the new first-person perspective action adventure game, is set in the industrial whaling city of Dunwall. The world has a painterly-style with a 19th century London feel, blended with steampunk, fantasy and science fiction influences. The teams in Austin, Texas and Lyon, France have been using UE3 technology to further push the envelope of non-linear exploration.

"We love first-person action games with aspects of RPGs or adventure games added in," says Raphael Colantonio, co-creative

director on *Dishonored* at Arkane Studios. "There's a particular type of game that is a blend of genres that we've always strived to create: immersive; first-person with resource economics; a cohesive, plausible sense of place; variable approaches and outcomes that are presented in a consistent way, often relying on simulation, so the player can formulate and execute strategic plans in how they undertake encounters."

FORWARD TO THE PAST

Dishonored gameplay blends combat, stealth, and role-playing features. Gamers take on the role of a supernatural assassin in a retro-futuristic world. The game mechanics can be applied creatively, as the developer is encouraging gamers to play their way.

According to Harvey Smith, co-creative director on *Dishonored* at Arkane Studios, there remains confusion over the types of games Arkane has worked on in the past such as *Arx Fatalis*, *Dark Messiah of Might & Magic* and *Deus Ex: Invisible War*.

"We've never worked on open world games, but the confusion exists because our games – while mission-based – feel very nonlinear and open-ended in very specific ways," explains Smith. "There are multiple pathways through the environment. Sometimes these are just realistic routes, like

rooftops and windows, and at other times these pathways are enabled by the player's choice of powers, play style and morality. We want to allow the player many choices so they can author their own experiences."

Arkane had a choice in technology when it came time to bringing its vision to life. Colantonio says that barring the additional stealth and AI code that the team wrote, UE3 enabled its artists and level designers to start immediately prototyping various layouts and mission concepts.

"Our game is special, blending first-person melee combat, stealth and physical mobility," says Colantonio. "So our tech director and lead gameplay engineer – Hugues Tardif and Stevan Hird, respectively – have led their teams in the creation of a variety of features and code extensions."

"We've used Unreal Kismet, Unreal Lightmass, the new navigation mesh system and most of the standard tools. We've also added our own features, such as audio propagation and a dialog editor, and we've replaced 'Matinee' with 'Soiree' because we needed to have a way for our NPCs to constantly switch between AI and scripted scenes," adds Smith. "We're proud of the amount of things we got the engine to do at the same time for performance."

A LEADING LIGHT

UE3, along with advances in technology, have helped the team implement exceptional lighting, develop better physics and gather more characters on screen with higher polygon counts. As a studio, there's a certain level of graphical fidelity that the team loves. Smith and Colantonio like the abstract game mechanics, but they also really like creating rich, interesting environments.

"We're using a lot of the advances in technology for a very analog AI system," says Smith. "The AI is not just a magic circle that knows where you're at when you're inside the circle. It has a set of view cones. It's used in the dark and with distance, where the vision falls off. The AI goes into an indeterminate state when it's not sure if it's seen you and will give up if it hasn't found you. It's a very warm, perception-based AI."

The end result is a nonlinear adventure that begs for replay given the open gameplay choices. This rich virtual world, ravaged by a rat plague and filled with unique characters, shows yet another way that UE3 is being used to enhance the creative visions of game developers around the globe. *Dishonored* stands out from the crowd, such as UE3 games *BioShock* and *Mass Effect* before it, as an innovative new interactive adventure. ■

Thanks to Arkane for speaking with freelance reporter John Gaudiosi for this feature.

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Canadian-born **Mark Rein** is co-founder and vice president of Epic Games, based in Cary, NC. Unreal Engine 3 has won eight *Game Developer* magazine Front Line Awards, including entry into the Hall of Fame. Unreal Engine 3 has also received four consecutive Develop Industry Excellence Awards. Epic is the developer of the bestselling *Unreal*, *Gears of War* and *Infinity Blade* series of games. Follow @MarkRein and @UnrealEngine on Twitter.

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UNITY FOCUS

Brian Fargo sees the Asset Store offering games developers creative freedom

WASTELAND 2

Developer: InXile Entertainment

What is it? The sequel to a classic Interplay 1988 RPG
wasteland.inxile-entertainment.com



The broad selection of assets in Unity's dev store has itself opened up creative potential, says InXile's Brian Fargo

FAMED FOR HIS roles on the first *Fallout* and *Wasteland* games, Brian Fargo is one of a new wave of long-established games development luminaries turning to Unity as their games engine of choice.

Like Peter Molyneux (see page 32), Fargo is a man invigorated by a return to games development of the kind Unity facilitates. His choice to work with the engine also serves as a case in point, proving that the era when Unity was the sole realm of the hobbyist and micro-indie is now long behind us.

For Fargo has picked the engine for *Wasteland 2*, the in-development sequel to his iconic 1988 PC game.

And, infamously, he has been utterly frank about how heavily his latest project has relied on Unity's Asset Store, which, in case you missed it, offers an in-editor marketplace for art assets, extensions, and a wealth of other solutions, such as user tutorials in addition to the tech.

500 ASSETS

In fact, *Wasteland* will have used up to 500 Asset Store items by the time it has been completed. That considered, one question immediately comes to mind. Can a game so rich with Asset Store content remain stylistically distinct and creatively unique?

"We can modify the assets we use so heavily that, by the time we are done, you can't recognise the asset for what it originally was," says InXile Entertainment founder Fargo in response.

"The Asset Store just gives us the underpinnings; the models on which we can build. Gamers are unlikely to be able to look at the game and identify an asset from the store. We used those assets to get a huge head start, and they let our guys skip doing a lot of the stuff that isn't that rewarding or important."

And, says Fargo, heavy Asset Store use has allowed his team to make incredibly quick progress, developing a substantial chunk of the highly polished title in just four months.

"The progress I've made in the past 100 or 120 days is more progress than I could have made in a year just three years ago," he reveals. "I've saved myself something close to a year if I'd have started from scratch."

“There's so much more wealth outside the big studios, in the form of Steven Spielberg, Tom Hanks or J.K. Rowling.”

Brian Fargo, InXile

FREE TO CREATE

In fact, Fargo also points to a benefit of using the Asset Store that many in the industry might not expect. Using the store's art assets, argues Fargo, can actually allow for and encourage creative freedom.

"Using Asset Store stuff does allow us to go to a new level of detail we might otherwise not reach in the same time," he states. "Let's say we're going to use the starting point of a train asset, which we can heavily modify. Our designers don't have to spend time starting that train from nothing – they start with something there already – so they have time to go into the finer details; stuff like graffiti, maybe hidden symbols."

"In that way we can make our game more meaningful, or rather filled with meaningful detail. We can use the Asset Store to elevate the game with those kind of nuances, instead

of worrying about just making a train. That kind of thing can even be integrated into the story if we choose."

Fargo's original attraction to Unity however, was about more than just the Asset Store. Like many, it was the tool's multiplatform nature that initially attracted him to the platform. "Unity was the perfect engine for us," he insists.

"It's multiplatform, and we were keen on the Linux support. That was something we'd told our backers; that we would support that. That was a big part of it for us."

"And, of course, it was the Asset Store, and all the other things in it, like routines and the stuff there that's invisible to the consumer. And, finally, it was the community that exists baround Unity. I mean, who wouldn't be attracted to that?"

As Fargo finishes his praise for the engine firm, however, there's a far bigger matter on his mind. He's sure the likes of Kickstarter and democratising tools such as Unity can help bring about 'a new distribution of wealth' in the games industry as old publisher-developer relationships dissipate and digital distribution, user-friendly tools and the crowdfunding boom puts power back in the hands of the creative.

"Think of other entertainment industries," says Fargo. "There's so much more wealth outside the big studios, be it in the form of Steven Spielberg, Tom Hanks or J.K. Rowling. Those individuals do the greatest work, and it's in their DNA to help other creatives. We have a few in games now, such as Notch, for example. But the more people like that we have, the better for everyone. Now developers can share data, contracts and the ways they work with technology. Retail and publishing have changed, and these tools let us distribute direct to our fans." ■

HEARD ABOUT

John Broomhall looks at Tsunami Music's role in action blockbuster *Sleeping Dogs*

Audio services

Service: Tsunami Music

Platforms: Multiplatform

www.tsunamimusic.com

SLEEPING DOGS IS the latest chart-topping blockbuster from Square Enix. Developed by United Front Games, the title is a gritty, visceral open world cop drama set in vibrant Hong Kong. Players are tasked with taking down one of the world's most fearsome criminal organisations as an undercover cop, which at times, involves tottering along a moral tightrope trying not to become the very thing you set out to destroy.

It's serious stuff and relentlessly 'real' with stunning, accurately rendered visuals and sonics. So when it came to licensed music – over 200 tracks in all, deployed via in-game radio stations – the team eschewed the tongue-in-cheek, comic parody of certain other open world extravaganzas in favour of something you really might actually hear around the streets of Hong Kong. 'Humour and character' were encouraged, but silliness and parody were outlawed.

Ken Easter originally set up Tsunami Music in 2000 as a composer agency for the games industry and subsequently diversified significantly into music licensing. These days, in addition to offering original soundtracks, Tsunami is now firmly established in providing music consultancy, supervision, production, licensing, negotiation and creative music search services for the video game, TV and advertising industries. *Sleeping Dogs* was a perfect opportunity for him to leverage Tsunami's relationships with hundreds of major and independent record labels, music publishers and artist managers.

HONG KONG CULTURE

"We set out to deliver Square Enix something unique and creative that would really sound like you were in Hong Kong," says Easter. "One of my colleagues at Tsunami, Jonathan Watts, used to work for a well-known global radio brand and we thought about how they would create radio shows and syndicate them to other stations around the world, and how relevant that was to the huge ex-pat community in Hong Kong who, when jumping into the back of a cab or walking into a café, might just as easily find themselves listening to a globally syndicated Western radio show as to one of the local Cantonese-language stations.

"Of course, being based in London was perfect – a centre which straddles cultural differences between China and the UK, it's so much a part of Hong Kong culture. Then we thought, if it needs to be 'real', why don't we leverage our knowledge of all these music brands we work with day in, day out to get interest from cool labels, not only providing the game kudos through music content but also, where possible, via the branding of radio station names – a proper thing that fans could relate to, as well as potentially providing additional marketing leverage.

"It also helped us secure good value by doing a package with say, Warp Records. Approaching an internationally respected



label like this with the idea that they'll have the name 'Warp Radio' in this amazing video game with their logo featured, plus we'd like to license 20 tracks, has to be a compelling proposition. At Tsunami, we then worked hard with Square Enix on carefully creating the station playlists, as opposed to simply including the obvious overused tracks that feature in other games.

We set out to deliver Square Enix something unique and creative that would really sound like you were in Hong Kong.

Ken Easter, Tsunami Music

"We cherry-picked the best of their catalogues including some forgotten gems, along with well-known classics, and up-and-coming new tracks that people haven't heard of yet but that we believe will be big. We also carefully selected tracks that had complementary lyrics relevant to the *Sleeping Dogs* storyline and the moral choices players have to navigate during the game.

"From a music brand point of view, with the music industry struggling, any exposure in a popular mass-market entertainment medium directly relevant to their target audience is welcome. It feels like we're breaking new ground as none of the brands we worked with have done anything like it before including the likes of Kerrang!, Ninja Tune, Warp, Daptone, Roadrunner and Boosie & Hawkes, who all sport their own in-game branded radio station."

BEARING WITNESS

As the aforementioned brand names bear witness, the game features music from a wide cross-section of genres from heavy metal to classical, with Tsunami also creating an entirely Cantonese offering. In addition to identifying the most suitable music brands, brokering deals, and subsequently selecting, negotiating and licensing all the music tracks each station – including the entirely Cantonese language show, they also created all the bespoke jingles, radio advertisements and DJ chat, handling voice casting, scripting and recording duties, and liaised with the various brands as to the choice of DJ voice talent for each radio station. There are nearly 50 radio adverts alone, scripted by Tsunami's award-winning copywriter.

Given the evident success of this 'real' approach, could it be the future might lie in having live streaming internet radio stations in these kinds of titles? "It's an interesting idea and we've considered it for sure. We're always looking for the next thing and would love to broker those kind of deals if they become possible," offers Easter. "However, it's something that needs a lot of thought, both from a technology, content control, and licensing/legal point of view. It's somewhat of a minefield."

Meanwhile, fans of the game have made no secret of their enthusiasm for the title's licensed music content, which points to the value of music experts like Tsunami creating the illusion of 'real' radio stations.



Sourcing music from local cultures helped *Sleeping Dogs* (top) feel more real, says Tsunami's Ken Easter



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REQUIRED READING: THINK LIKE A PROGRAMMER

In his new book **V. Anton Spraul** offers a model for rewiring your own brain, not by learning how to program, but by learning how to problem-solve from a programmer's frame of reference. Here we publish an introductory excerpt



THIS BOOK is about problem solving, but what is problem-solving, exactly?

When people use the term in ordinary conversation, they often mean something very different from what we mean here. If your 1997 Honda Civic has blue smoke coming from the tailpipe, is idling roughly, and has lost fuel efficiency, this is a problem that can be solved with automotive knowledge, diagnosis, replacement equipment and common shop tools. If you tell your friends about your problem, though, one of them might say, "Hey, you should trade that old Honda in for something new. Problem solved." But your friend's suggestion wouldn't really be a solution to the problem – it would be a way to avoid the problem.

Problems include constraints, unbreakable rules about the problem or the way in which the problem must be solved. With the broken-down Civic, one of the constraints is that you want to fix the current car, not purchase a new car. The constraints might also include the overall cost of the repairs, how long the repair will take, or a requirement that no new tools can be purchased just for this repair.

A PROGRAM SOLVED

When solving a problem with a program, you also have constraints. Common constraints include the programming language, platform (does it run on a PC, or an iPhone, or what?), performance (a game program may require graphics to be updated at least 30 times a second, a business application might have a maximum time response to user input), or memory footprint. Sometimes the constraint involves what other code you can reference:

Maybe the program can't include certain open source code, or maybe the opposite – maybe it can use only open source.

For programmers, then, we can define problem-solving as writing an original program that performs a particular set of tasks and meets all stated constraints. Beginning programmers are often so eager to accomplish the first part of that definition – writing a program to perform a certain task – that they fail on the second part of the definition, meeting the stated constraints. I call a program like that, one that appears to produce correct results but breaks one or more of the stated rules, a Kobayashi Maru. If that name is unfamiliar to you, it means you are insufficiently familiar with one of the touchstones of geek culture, the film *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan*.

THE FINAL FRONTIER

The film contains a subplot about an exercise for aspiring officers at Starfleet Academy. The cadets are put aboard a simulated starship bridge and made to act as captain on a mission that involves an impossible choice. Innocent people will die on a wounded ship, the Kobayashi Maru, but to reach them requires starting a battle with the Klingons, a battle that can only end in the destruction of the captain's ship.

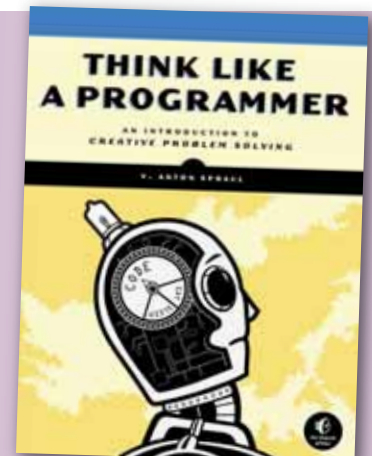
The exercise is intended to test a cadet's courage under fire. There's no way to win, and all choices lead to bad outcomes. Toward the end of the film, we discover that Captain Kirk modified the simulation to make it actually winnable. Kirk was clever, but he did not solve the dilemma of the Kobayashi Maru; he avoided it.

Fortunately, the problems you will face as a programmer are solvable, but many still resort to Kirk's approach. In some cases, they do so accidentally. ("Oh, shoot! My solution only works if there are a hundred data items or fewer. It's supposed to work for an unlimited data set. I'll have to rethink this.")

In other cases, the removal of constraints is deliberate, a ploy to meet a deadline imposed by a boss or an instructor. In still other cases, the programmer just doesn't know how to meet all of the constraints. In the worst cases I have seen, the programming student has paid someone else to write the program. Regardless of the motivations, we must always be diligent to avoid the Kobayashi Maru. ■



Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan (top) can teach us much, as can author V. Anton Spraul, above



THE BOOK

Think Like a Programmer by **V. Anton Spraul** presents the idea that simply learning to program is just the start of truly understanding the art of coding. To really master the discipline and improve your abilities, he argues, instead you must master creative problem-solving.

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RECRUITER HOT SEAT

Techland's recruitment specialists **Matylda Siuta** and **Natalia Selinger** talk about life at the studio behind Dead Island and show you why an international career move is within your reach

What are the benefits of working at a studio such as Techland?

Natalia Selinger: Techland is a company with a history of more than 20 years. In that time we have been at the forefront of the video games industry in Poland, which in itself is now definitely a permanent mark on the world map of interactive entertainment.

Working here means becoming a part of a large, independent studio with its own proprietary technology. Chrome Engine, currently entering its sixth version, allowed us to release multiplatform products for leading publishers, selling millions of copies around the world.

Despite our stability and independence, we are a friendly company with very little use for bureaucracy. Our crew is almost two hundred young and dynamic people bound by ambition and creative passion. It consists of both highly experienced industry specialists and young apprentices of different trades.

All of them perceive electronic entertainment as not only their job but, more importantly, their lifetime passion and hobby. Our work atmosphere is one-of-a-kind.

How many staff are you looking to take on? And from what fields?

Matylda Siuta: We are currently looking for around 25-to-30 new employees from various areas. Our main concerns are senior gameplay and AI programmers, as well as level, game and story designers.

All current offers are always presented on our website. In a longer perspective we will also be expanding our engine programmers team. We also offer internship programs for students, often providing full-time employment afterwards.

“Techland is two hundred young and dynamic people bound by ambition and creative passion.”

Matylda Siuta, Techland

What perks are available to those working at your studio?

Selinger: Regarding non-financial bonuses, we cover 50 per cent costs of the private medical care and support package. We have a well-developed library with games and books in our studios for employee use.

Also, each of our staff has an additional retirement fund – fully paid by Techland – which remains under their complete control even after leaving the company.

For international employees we're also offering an additional relocation package: assisting with the move, dispensing with any formalities, and finding and paying for living space for a certain time. All those options and any further needs can be discussed in more detail during the interview.

What should aspiring developers do with their CV to get to an interview?

Siuta: The most important part of the CV is a portfolio. If you don't have any professional or commercial experience, include a description or a demo of an amateur game project you created with friends.

We're in the business of interactive entertainment so we're looking for passion and initiative. We always pay close attention to people who start at an early age: college projects, amateur mods and maps, audio or visual demos definitely work in your favour.

Another quality we're always looking for is dependability. Every games development veteran will attest that completing a project and releasing it on time is much, much more difficult than starting it. If you have something to prove that you're organised and self-motivated, then by all means show it.

Who is the best interviewee you have ever had and how did they impress you?

Selinger: I remember the impression which one of our current employees made from the moment he entered the room for his interview. He spent most of his professional life creating banking software for a financial corporation. One day he decided to become a video games producer.

He was so motivated to do something exciting and so passionate about games that he convinced us and got his chance to combine management with art – which is what

BIO

Names: Matylda Siuta and Natalia Selinger
Titles: Recruitment Specialist and HR Manager
www.techlandjobs.com



GET THAT JOB

Development specialists offer advice on how you can bag that career leap

THIS MONTH: TECHNOLOGY RESEARCH DEVELOPER

“You need to be bright, creative, enthusiastic and willing to turn your mind to any new areas of development.”

“First and foremost, technology trends must genuinely interest you and keeping abreast of relevant fields through industry news sites, blogs, podcasts and social media channels is essential.”

“There will be times when you need to research completely unfamiliar territory, requiring you to assess the latest academic research, evaluate middleware and frameworks, and learn new programming languages or platforms.”

“The wealth of experience you gather taking a personal technology project from inception to completion is also invaluable.”

Dr Dylan Banarse,
Science Officer, Animal Vegetable Mineral



SIX-SECOND STUDIO SPOTLIGHT



■ Guerilla Tea was founded by four masters graduates from the University of Abertay: Charlie Czerkowski, Alex Zeitler, Matt Zanetti and Mark Hastings

■ Its mission is to integrate areas of study with innovative game design for mobile platforms

■ Game designer Czerkowski compares its close-knit team, that relies on each of their individual disciplines, to that of a rock band

■ Credentials include 20 years of coding, and QA on the GTA series

■ Its premier mobile puzzle game *The Quest*, was nominated for a Scottish BAFTA in 2012

■ Guerilla Tea is now working on an iOS helicopter dogfighting title inspired by children's play habits
www.guerillatea.com





we believe games development is. After contributing to several different projects, he's now the producer of our newly announced *Project Hell*.

And who was the worst?

Selinger: No 'bad' candidates, but there definitely is a wrong attitude. In general, people with no motivation to work are bad interviewees.

They seem not to care wherever they work, and it looks like they are wasting their time talking with HR. Usually, they are not aware how important soft competences are and because of that they might miss a lot of opportunities. Their co-workers might also see them in a similar way, so they may also be isolated in their current jobs.

What advice would you give for a successful interview?

Siuta: Think about your expectations for the interview and remind yourself of its purpose: we want to get to know you better, the real you! Be yourself, relax and come talk to us.

Picture the company you want to work for: a cool games development studio full of people passionate about video games, art, music, programming and all sorts of nerdy things that you also know and love. This is an attitude that will serve you best. Good luck.

If you have recruited internationally, what was the process like?

Siuta: Actually, we have just started to seek our first international applicants. Being aware of cultural, technological

and designing differences will help push us forward in this competitive business. We are looking forward to employing the best talent in the industry to ensure both diversity and quality in our creative processes.

We're obviously eager to conduct initial interviews via Skype as that option is usually the most convenient for applicants. The second stage of the recruitment process will require selected candidates to be interviewed in person at one of our offices in Poland. At that stage senior management will directly participate in the talks.

Is there any other advice you wish to add about recruitment, career changing and specialisms at Techland or in the games development industry?

Selinger: Be positive. Smile. Dress comfortably, we're not big on suits. Show us your passion towards games. Try to surprise us.

Techland is used to working with the best companies in the industry from all over the world, but we're just beginning to recruit internationally.

It's an exciting time for the whole company as we're looking towards a bright future of diverse platforms, business models and the next generation of high definition consoles.

We're based in a beautiful country that's worth discovering. Visit our recruitment site online at techlandjobs.com to find out more about living and working in Wrocław or Warsaw.

NEW STUDIO ALERT!

NYAMYAM IS A studio fit to blossom. Jennifer Schneiderei and Phil Tossell founded the Staffordshire developer in September 2010 after leaving Rare. While working together on *Kinect Sports*, the duo discovered shared interests and a desire to make indie games. Its inaugural title, *Tengami*, has already been selected for 2012 showcases at the Tokyo Game Show and IndieCade.

"The philosophy behind Nyamyam is to create beautifully crafted games that have an indefinable sense of wonder to them," says co-founder Tossell (far right). "We also wanted to create a working environment where everyone was equal and everyone's ideas and creativity were respected and encouraged."

Nyamyam has a loose structure and doesn't believe in job titles, instead encouraging one another to develop and explore their own skills in whatever direction they choose.

Tossell worked at Rare for 13 years, where he was lead programmer on *Starfox Adventures* and *Kameo*, before becoming director of gameplay for the whole company.

Schneiderei's (middle) career started at Acquire, an independent Japanese developer in Tokyo. She initially began as a software engineer, but gradually moved towards games design. The third full-time member of the team is Ryo Agarie (bottom right), an artist who worked at Rare for ten years, whose work includes Xbox Live Avatars. Nyamyam also works with audio maestro David Wise (left) and animator Christiaan Moleman.

"On *Tengami*, the design and programming work is mainly shared between Jennifer and me, with Ryo doing the majority of the art," explains Tossell.

Nyamyam's plans so far only extend as far as releasing *Tengami* on iPad before moving straight onto iPhone, PC and Mac versions.

"We have no plans to expand the company," says Tossell. "We very much believe that the future of games is in groups of creative people coming together around something they are passionate about. It's a very organic process."

www.nyamyam.com



MOVERS AND SHAKERS

This month: Jagex, Ripstone, Hide&Seek and Kwaalee



JAGEX ■ Jagex has promoted its VP of technology to the position of chief technology officer.

REMO GETTINI, who joined the studio in March last

year, takes over the reigns from current CEO Mark Gerhard, who previously held a dual role at the company.

Gettini will be responsible for technology on existing and future titles at Jagex, whilst he will also help lead development on the studio's upcoming games platform.

The service is being designed to help third-party developers create, distribute and operate online games.

"Remo has a proven record in creating innovative gaming platforms built on next generation technologies as well as scaling highly talented engineering teams time and time again," said Jagex CEO Mark Gerhard.

"He is smart, passionate, forward thinking and the ideal person to drive forward our innovative technology."

Gettini added: "When I joined Jagex, I said that the entire games industry was at a turning point, on the precipice of substantial change.

"I firmly believe that Jagex is in an exceptionally unique position to facilitate this change by supporting likeminded developers as they strive to create ground breaking online games by utilising our industry leading online technology and platforms."

Prior to joining Jagex, Gettini worked at EA as head of EMEA Interactive Central, where he oversaw technology for games such as *FIFA* and *Need for Speed*. He was also a founding member of EA Mobile.



RIPSTONE ■

Liverpool-based indie publisher Ripstone has bolstered its team by hiring **AMI LANGTON** as it

new global PR and marketing assistant. Langton will aid the Ripstone's PR and marketing team from strategic planning through to tactical activities.

"I love games, innovative ideas and working with talented people," said Langton. "As a former triple-A developer I'm very fortunate to have worked with some of the best in the industry and looking around the Ripstone office today, I still am."

Before joining the team, Langton said she "admired Ripstone from afar" for providing indie developers with the platform and resources they deserved.

"It's wonderful to be a part of such an amazing support system that's been created for developers, by developers," she said.

Langton first stepped into the world of games in 2006 when she was originally employed as a cleaner at acclaimed development studio Bizarre Creations. But through fast promotion,

she wound up managing Bizarre Creations' PR department under Activision Blizzard, and assisting across two projects simultaneously.

Ripstone's global PR and marketing manager Michelle Senior added: "We're dedicated not only to great games, but investing in great people. The knowledge and experience Ami brings from her days at Bizarre Creations is fundamental to the Ripstone team as we continue to grow and expand our games catalogue."



HIDE&SEEK ■

Hide&Seek has hired **MARK SORRELL** as development director.

Sorrell is known for creating a range of commercially successful projects in TV and games media at Quiz TV, Sky Games, FremantleMedia's Screenpop and Somethin' Else, including brands such as Countdown, Scrabble, Ben 10 and The Premier League.

"I'm excited to be joining Hide&Seek as development director," said Sorrell. "What Hide&Seek do so brilliantly is apply games design beyond the confines of the gaming industry and into cultural and public spaces."

Sorrell's appointment comes as Hide&Seek expands to the USA. Former Hide&Seek development director Margaret Robertson has become director of Hide&Seek New York.

Robertson said: "New York has always had a rich gaming culture, so it is a natural step for us to set up there."

Alex Fleetwood, director and founder of Hide&Seek, added: "We're absolutely thrilled to have Mark Sorrell on board. He brings invaluable commercial experience to Hide&Seek at a particularly exciting time for us. He will be working closely with myself and Margaret as Hide&Seek expands."



KWALEE ■ Newly graduated programmer

BARNABY SMITH has joined Kwaalee as a programmer. Smith graduated top of his year and

has a first class degree in Computer Games Programming from the University of Huddersfield.

At 23, he has already worked as a lead programmer on multiple projects for Canalside Studios and his project history includes work for Neon Play and Four Door Lemon, which has helped to establish him as one to watch in the UK gaming community.

"I'm very excited to become part of the Kwaalee team," said Smith. "Kwaalee is the best of both worlds as it combines an astounding amount of industry experience with its ability as a young studio to change with the rapidly moving mobile market."

Adam Philbin, team lead, said: "We're excited to have Barnaby on board."

Service & Tech Recruiter Hot Seat

We speak to EdgeCast's director of recruiting **Tyler Townes** about roles in infrastructure technologies

What makes EdgeCast different from other content delivery companies?

Performance. Independent third parties consistently rate us as one of the best-performing 'content delivery networks' in the world. And recently we announced that we're the only CDN that has Google PageSpeed integrated and working all around the world.

Another critical differentiator is our customer service – we aim to exceed our customers' expectations with every interaction. It's hard to ignore culture, too: we get to hang out in sunny Santa Monica close to the beach, play ping pong in our kitchen and work with 200 of the best and brightest.

What benefits do you offer staff?

Competitive salaries, performance bonuses, stock options, 401K matching, choice of several great

health plans, a fun employee referral bonus program, a beautiful location and excellent career growth potential.

Which disciplines are you in need of?

We need technology pros, including system engineers (Linux), developers (core engineering, web programmers; .NET, LAMP/Python and C/C++), application support and NOC, web performance and security engineers.

We're seeking to fill leadership roles including director of CDN systems. We are also looking for excellent people to fill several product, marketing and sales positions.

With mobile technology, how have your recruitment needs changed?

We definitely take notice of developers who understand the unique challenges of delivering video and

other content to mobile devices. The explosion of mobile has driven us to seek engineering candidates with a deeper understanding of the peculiarities of mobile formatting, encoding, sizing and delivery.

Describe some of the skills or personalities you look for in potential employees?

While the perfect candidate is a mixture of many positive attributes, the three areas that we look for most are: applied intelligence, positive intent and entrepreneurial motivation.

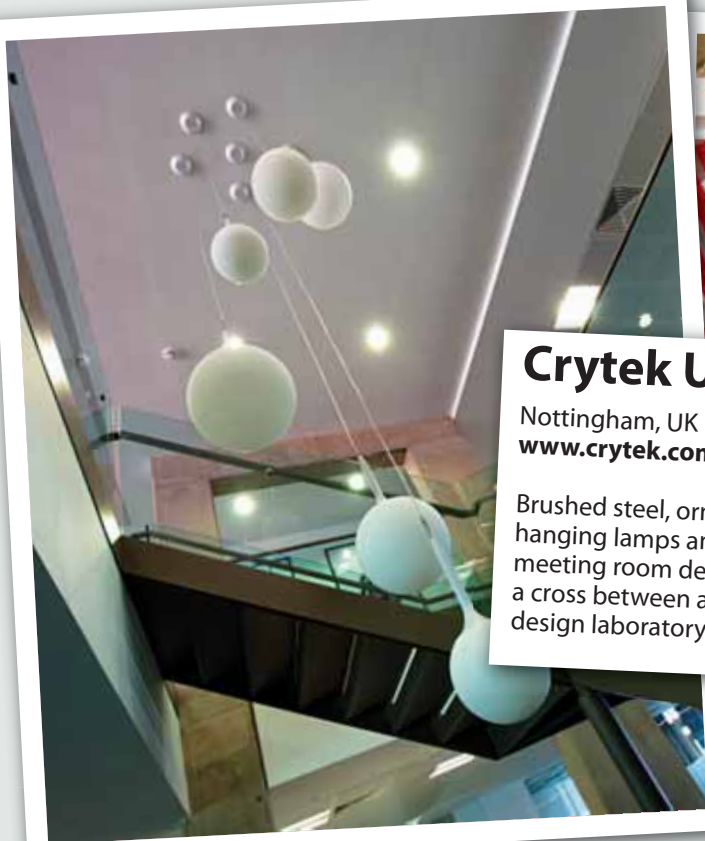
Applied intelligence would be reflected in a record of problem-solving and accomplishment in the core area of expertise, and asking insightful questions about the company, department and role during the interview.

Positive intent is a general optimistic outlook on life that sees opportunity where others see obstacles.

Entrepreneurial motivation, we like to see people who have gone above and beyond to excel in various areas of life. That's the spirit we're looking for.

www.edgecast.com





Crytek UK

Nottingham, UK
www.crytek.com

Brushed steel, ornamental arrangements of hanging lamps and futuristic-looking meeting room decor make Crytek's UK office a cross between a supervillain's lair and a design laboratory.



THIS IS **WHERE WE WORK**



Q-Games

Kyoto, Japan
www.q-games.com

Co-founder Dylan Cuthbert rehearses with his studio band. Elsewhere, team members let off steam by getting in some gaming time of their own at the *PixelJunk*-maker's crib.



SERVICES SPOTLIGHT

This month: **Centurion Art Development**

Centurion Art Development

Diqu Plaza, 19th Floor
666 Taikang East Road
Yinzhou District, Ningbo 315100,
People's Republic of China

T: +1 760 846 6980 (US)
E: contact@centurionartdev.com
W: www.centurionartdev.com

CONSISTENCY, EFFICIENCY AND reliability are the cornerstones of Centurion Art Development's philosophy. Located in Ningbo, China, this art studio was founded in August 2011 by president Dwayne Mason.

Centurion Art focuses purely on art and animation services. It provides high fidelity 3D modelling, texturing and materials development, in addition to other services. Practically all elements of art asset production for its clients' needs.

Centurion offers high quality 2D and 3D concept, illustration and design aid covering the full spectrum of visual requirements, from characters, creatures, props, vehicles, weapons, environments and mood boards, to production-ready asset concepts, HUD and UI design and implementation.

"We can match the required art style for anything that our clients might require," says Mason. "From extreme photorealism to the highly stylised and painterly. We have worked on projects ranging from beloved children's properties to grisly scenes for horror games and even high detail court re-enactment animation works."

The design studio uses industry-standard digital art production tools and techniques. It is flexible when it comes to working within its clients' preferred art packages and asset

“By offering very high quality art services and production management, we expect to grow as a company and as a partner across the industry.”

Dwayne Mason, Centurion

management systems. It also provides its own project management solutions for clients' use during extended productions with them.

To date, Centurion Art has provided small to large scale productions for mobile and web games to significant character, prop and environment work on triple-A console projects.



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2D concept assets from
Centurion Art (above), and
studio president
Dwayne Mason (right).

It has done work on 2D sprite-based games, asset reduction for ports from console to mobile games, and many different PS3 and Xbox 360 action-adventure and FPS games. It is currently working for several large developers and publishers on titles that will remain under wraps for some months.

Mason asserts that his years of experience as an art director and studio head for a console platform's software development studio, as well as the experience of his co-founder and team as a collective, makes Centurion Art well-equipped to understand and execute upon the elements required for quality art production. This allows it to almost always charge to its initial estimates.

"Art production outsourcing is already well-established for many good business reasons – at Centurion our goal is to make the whole experience efficient, effective and, ultimately, very rewarding for our customers and partners," says Mason.

Centurion Art also celebrated its first anniversary last month and Mason is now looking ahead to what's next.

"We are already a significant company in the interactive entertainment art production space after only one year in business – and we expect to become much more significant over the next couple of years as we continue to grow," he says.

"By offering very high quality art services combined with efficient production management, maintaining clean and clear communication with our clients and keeping to competitive rates and a full range of art services, we expect to grow as a company and as a partner across the industry."

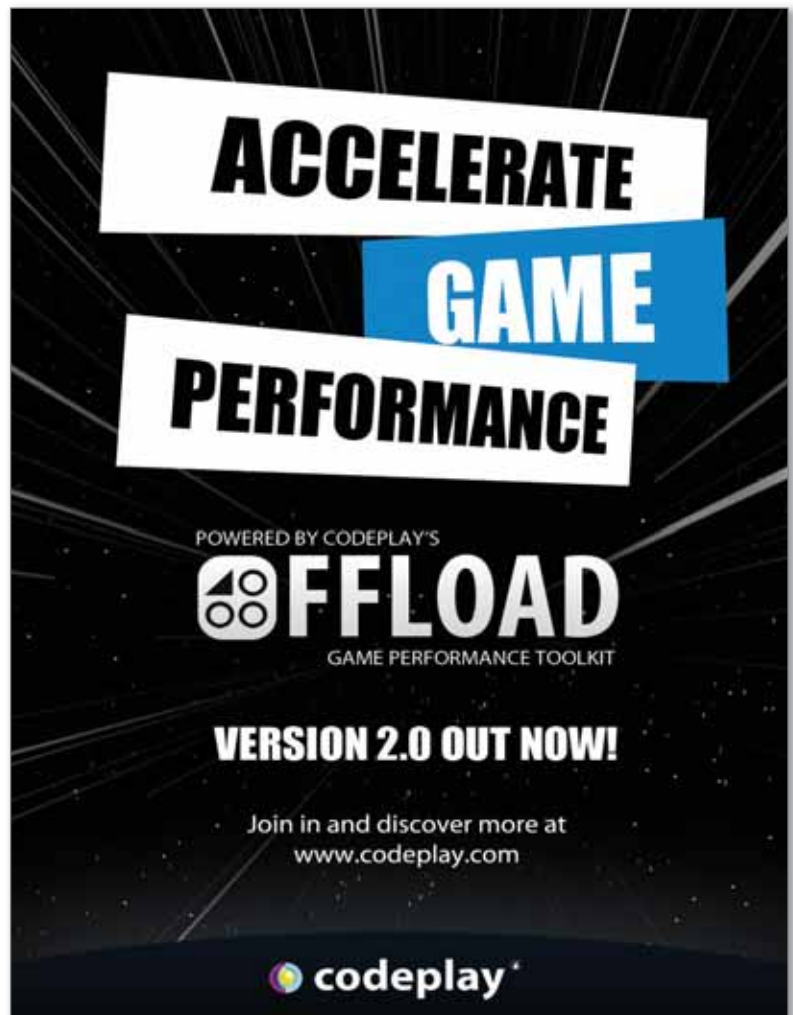


Blitz Game Studios 01926 880000 www.blitzgamesstudios.com



DEVELOP-ONLINE.NET

Codeplay 0131 466 0503 www.codeplay.com



OCTOBER 2012 | 59

TOOLS SPOTLIGHT

This month: **Blitz Research**

Blitz Research
11 Claverdon Drive
Massey
Auckland 0614
New Zealand

T: +64 9 832 0375
E: info@blitzbasic.com
W: www.blitzbasic.com

BLITZ RESEARCH WAS founded by Mark Sibly in 2000, and is dedicated to the creation of easy to use programming languages and tools targeted at games developers.

Sibly is a veteran of the 1980s programming scene, and developed games for the TRS-80, Apple II, VIC-20, C64 and Amiga computers before moving on to the PC and Mac.

Blitz Research's claim to fame is developing the Monkey programming language that's been used in the massively popular *New Star Soccer*.

Monkey provides users with a set of APIs designed to run on a wide variety of devices. It was first released in January 2011. The language is easy to use and includes features such as classes, interfaces, modules and simple generics. It builds upon earlier Blitz languages, which include Blitz2D, Blitz3D and BlitzMax.

"The APIs have been designed for ease of use, with simple, high-level functions such as DrawImage, SetColor and PlaySound that work virtually identically on all target devices," explains Blitz Research developer support manager Simon Armstrong.

"All rendering is 'direct' for maximum speed – there is no retained mode or scene graph included, although you can of course write your own or use one of the many third-party ones.

The APIs have been designed for ease of use, with simple, high-level functions that work identically on all target devices.

Simon Armstrong,
Blitz Research

Monkey programs can be built for Windows, MacOS, HTML5, Flash, Android, iOS, XNA and PlayStation Mobile platforms. The language itself is written in the language, and comes with full source code.

At heart, Monkey is a translator. Instead of being compiled to assembly or machine code, Monkey source code



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The Monkey-powered
Zombie Trailer Park (below),
and developer support manager
Simon Armstrong (right).

is translated to functionally equivalent source code in another high-level language.

Monkey currently includes translators for C++, C#, Java, JavaScript and ActionScript, in addition to community-produced working translators for BlitzMax and Python.

"Monkey code is always 'native' on the device being targeted, and there is no runtime interpreter involved. It generates native code that is compiled and run just as if it was hand coded. There is no speed penalty and it allows you to target multiple platforms from a single language," says Armstrong.

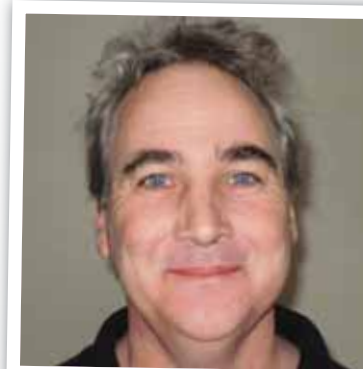
New Star Soccer (profiled in *Develop* #131) is a great example of work by a Monkey developer that has taken advantage of publishing its game on multiple target platforms.

The Flash version on free sites like Kongregate up-sell a significant number of players to the mobile versions, says Armstrong.

"Once the number of players started to swell on the Android and iOS app stores the game got picked up by the UK newspapers and it was all on," Armstrong explains.

The most recent feature added is the ability to read directly from the backbuffer and to write directly to images, allowing for dynamic image creation and a range of special effects. Blitz is currently in the process of adding asynchronous networking features too.

"There is a Windows 8 version on the way and we are eagerly awaiting the release of the Ouya SDK," Armstrong concludes. "We are also watching the Steam-on-Linux situation closely. The APIs are constantly being improved depending on the needs of the community."



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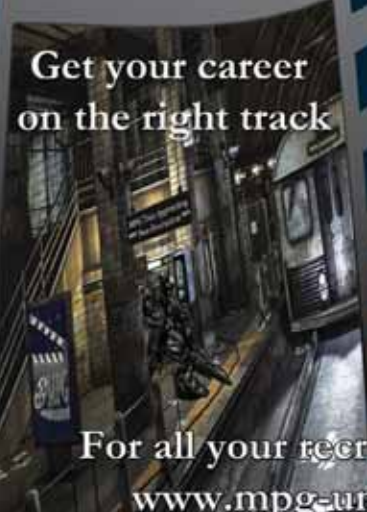
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TRAINING SPOTLIGHT

This month: **Perforce**

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Wellington Road
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United Kingdom

T: +44 0 845 345 0116

E: uk@perforce.com

W: www.perforce.com

PERFORCE SOFTWARE IS an application and solutions provider that enables companies to create and develop their own products.

It recently launched a new programme for learning institutes called Perforce in Education.

The initiative allows students and faculty at academic institutes worldwide to freely use the Perforce software management system to create all their digital assets. In addition to providing free licences, the programme helps students get up and running faster by making access to Perforce's introductory online course freely available. Students will also have the chance to engage with Perforce industry experts and learn about internships at the company.

Using Perforce prepares students for careers in modern digital development. They can iterate, manage digital files and ensure all their assets are reproducible and traceable. The system also provides branching and merging features, enabling teams to work on different assets simultaneously while keeping project management in order.

The Perforce system is also scalable and is integrated with graphical tools including Photoshop, Softimage, 3ds Max and Maya.

"We'll boast less about our education programme and more about the advantages of knowing our product," says Perforce COO Nigel Chanter. "While many companies offer their software to educational institutions, few can match the traction we have in the games industry."

"More than 150 games developers – including 18 of the top 20 publishers – rely on Perforce. So using the software gives students real world experience with the enterprise-level version management systems likely used by their future employers."

"Knowing how to manage digital assets in Perforce can serve as a leg-up in the job market. We see job postings all the time looking for candidates with Perforce experience, especially in the games industry."

Perforce has offered free licences to academic institutions for over a decade and is used by well-known research and development schools such as MIT and Stanford.



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Images courtesy of Criterion Games

17 years of educating video game professionals

"The University of Hull have been a key partner for Criterion over the last 2 years, providing over 70% of our Graduate Engineering intake."

Paul Ross, CTO, Criterion Games

"After some years working as a programmer, I decided to attend the MSc in Games Programming at Hull University. It was probably the best investment of my life. Now I'm a programmer at an AAA studio."

Manuele Bonanno, MSc Graduate

www.msdegrees.com



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A Perforce product launch (above), the firm's COO Nigel Chanter (right), and a schematic diagram of a typical Perforce deployment (below)

Technische Universität München and the University of Limerick have also used Perforce for free.

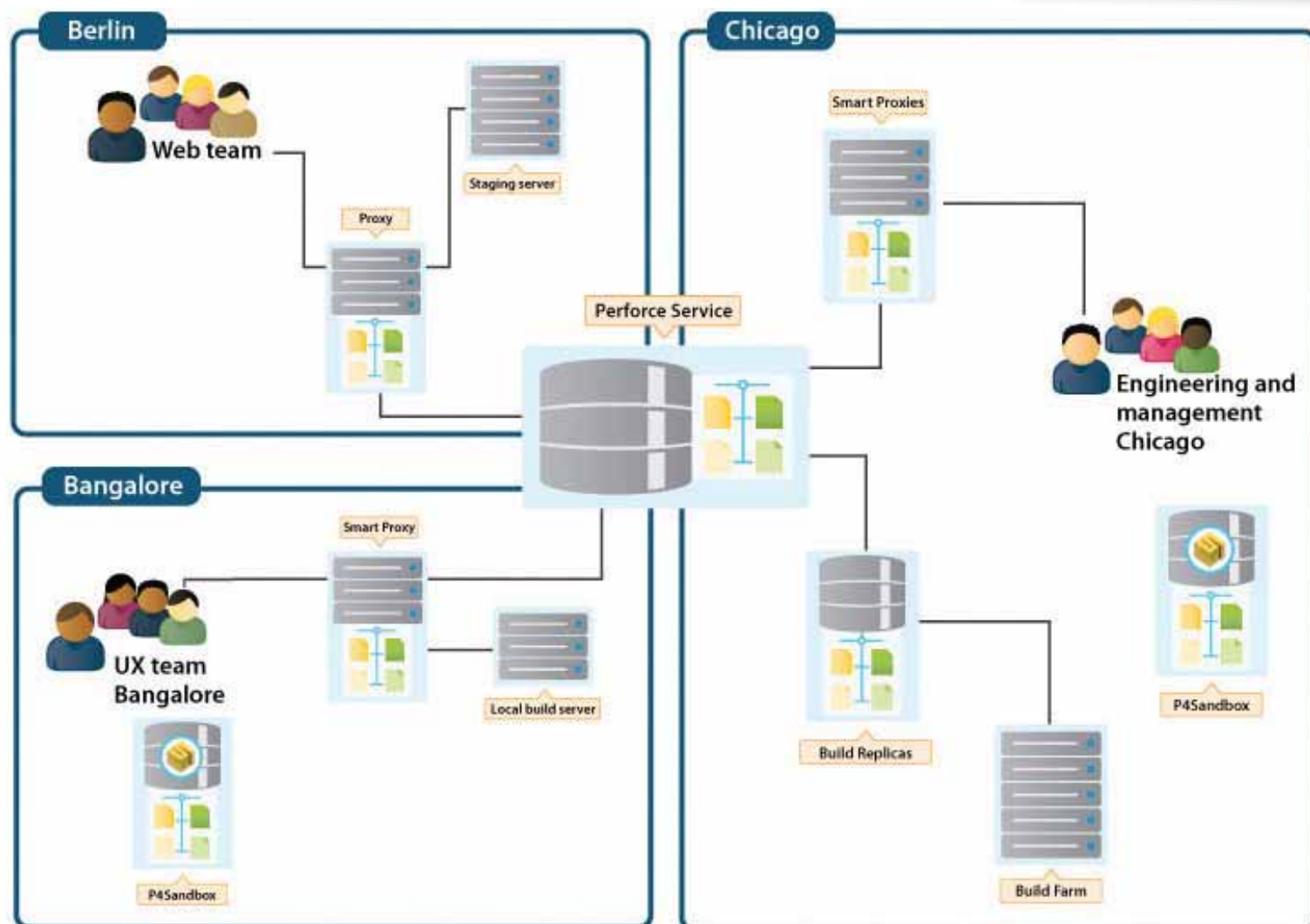
"We recently decided to be more proactive by formalising the programme and adding the training component to enable more colleges and universities to take advantage of the offer," Chanter adds.

He says he is proud that Perforce is used widely by games development studios around the world.

Most recently it partnered with Epic Games. It began to ship Perforce with the July release of its Unreal Development Kit. Approximately more than one million UDK users can use the development framework for 3D software and manage those files easily at no additional cost.

"As we develop new training materials and resources that might be especially applicable to students, we'll look to include them in our education programme as well," says Chanter, who is keen to spread the word about the company's software solutions.

"In closing, we have always been committed to supporting education, we've just never promoted it before."



CODA

A sideways look at the games industry

1.

THE CREATIVE ASSEMBLY



THE DEVELOP QUIZ

The scores are in for the latest Develop Quiz, meaning it's time to run down the results

MID-SEPTEMBER SAW the sharpest minds from across the UK's games industry descend on the tri-annual Develop Quiz.

A quick-witted team from The Creative Assembly eventually took home the coveted trophy after storming to victory with one of the highest scores ever achieved at a Develop Quiz, dropping just four points out of 72.

Firefly Studios trailed closely behind, just two points shy of the victors, while audio and scripting outfit Side took third place.

Teams clashed over topics like 'Villains' Lairs' and 'Heroines of Science Fiction', and were perplexed by the 'Who's Behind Seb Coe's sports test.

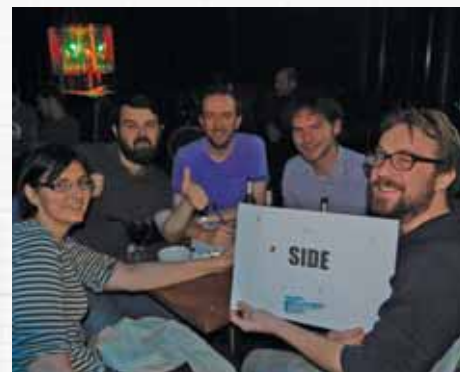
Thanks to the teams, the quiz's sponsors Microsoft and Deep Silver, and our round sponsors UKIE, Testronic and Avatar Games Recruitment, the event was an enormous success.

If you want to be there for our January 30th Develop Quiz, taking place in London, keep an eye on our website, or email kathryn.humphrey@intentmedia.co.uk.

1. WINNERS: The Creative Assembly	68 points
2. Firefly Studios	66 points
3. Side	63 points
4. UKIE	61 points
5. Splash Damage	60 points
6. Deep Silver	60 points
7. Wave Studios	60 points
8. Bossa Studios	59 points
9. Unity	56 points
10. Testronic	55 points
11. Microsoft	55 points
12. Blitz Games Studios	53 points
13. First Touch Games	53 points
14. Big Head Games	52 points
15. Future Games of London	51 points
16. Jagex	45 points
17. Datascope	36 points



2. FIREFLY STUDIOS



3. SIDE



6. DEEP SILVER



7. WAVE STUDIOS



10. TESTRONIC



11. MICROSOFT



14. BIG HEAD GAMES



15. FUTURE GAMES OF LONDON





4. UKIE



5. SPLASH DAMAGE



8. BOSSA STUDIOS



9. UNITY



12. BLITZ GAMES STUDIOS



13. FIRST TOUCH GAMES



16. JAGEX



17. DATASCOPE

NOVEMBER 2012

Start Your Own Studio Special

Setting up on your own? We can help out with a range of features written by experts in business, finance and law

BUILD Special Feature: Character Animation

This head-to-toe guide examines what's new in the technologies that make game characters walk, run and save the world

REGION FOCUS: South & Latin America

We take a look at one of the most talked about, and least explored emerging markets

Events:

Launch Conference – November 13th - 14th

London Games Conference 2012 – November 21st

Game Connection Europe – November 28th - 30th

DECEMBER/JANUARY 2012/2013

30 Under 30

Develop shines its talent spotlight on the best young achievers shaping the industry's future

BUILD Special Feature: Motion Capture

A detailed look at mo-cap techniques, hardware and tools, from desktop solutions to fully rigged stages

REGION FOCUS: Scotland

Develop heads north to see how the Scots are adapting to a changing games industry hub

Events:

Develop Quiz – January 30th

FEBRUARY 2013

Recruitment Special

Our annual look at the jobs market includes advice for CVs, portfolios and interviews; guidance on promotions; and more

Salary Survey

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THE FAQ PAGE: WARWICK DAVIS

Develop bucks tradition and grills a respected film actor and Star Wars celebrity with a taste for games development

Warwick Davis, infamous for his roles in *Star Wars* and *Willow*, is now directing a game about himself named *Pocket Warwick*

Who are you and what do you do?

I'm Warwick Davis, and I'm currently working on *Pocket Warwick*, a very different game for leading smartphone platforms in which I'm the star. I'm directing the project, and making it with Matmi, and it has been a truly fantastic experience.



What other video games have you worked on previously?

There was the *Harry Potter* games, but that was much more of a case of turning up and giving them my performance. Still, I really enjoyed that as an actor, and it was a great project to be involved in. *Pocket Warwick*, though, is the first game I've ever been involved with like this, as a director, realising how complex the games development process is. It's taught me to really respect what games developers do.

“ Us actors can spend a lot of time out of work, and games offer a great stage. Actors who don't involve themselves in video games are missing a trick. ”

What was the very first video game you ever played?

I think it was *Pong* for me, and then later all sorts on the Atari 2600. I've always loved my gadgets and video games.

What was the most recent video game you ever played?

That's really hard. I play a lot on my phone, so I can't recall exactly the last one I played. I love a lot of the board games stuff going on on phones right now, and the way they've used the iPhone there; things like *Scrabble*. But that wasn't the last thing I played. It might have been *Reckless Racing* or *Reckless Getaway*.

How many hours a week do you spend playing video games?

Quite a lot really. Maybe even five hours a week. It all adds up, playing mobile games in small chunks.

What is your favourite game ever, and for what reason?

That really is difficult. There's been so many. I did used to love the Amiga back in the 1990s, and I'd get everything the Bitmap Brothers would do. So I'd have to say something like *The Chaos Engine*, which I really love, or there's *Speedball*. And, of course, there's *Pocket Warwick*.

What encourages you about the games industry from what you've seen?

There's the creativity, and the ability to engage the audience so completely. And it's a huge opportunity for actors. Us actors can spend a lot of time out of work, and games offer a great stage. Actors who don't involve themselves in video games are missing a trick, they really are.

What's your favourite film you've ever worked on?

This I get asked a lot, and it never gets any easier to answer. Do I say *Star Wars*, which gave me my career? That's the reason I'm sat here today talking about *Pocket Warwick*. Or there's *Willow*, which was a wonderful experience. And I've done lots of films nobody ever talks about. For example, there's *The White Pony*, a really good children's film which was just a really nice thing to be part of. I played a nice Leprechaun in that movie, but everybody remembers my evil Leprechaun in the *Leprechaun* series of movies. I did really enjoy doing the *Leprechaun* films too. They're all favourites in a way.

What hobbies and interests do you have outside of films and video games?

I really don't have any time for anything else. My work is my passion, and I'm lucky there. There really is nothing. Of course, I love films, and they are a big part of my life. I just don't have any hobbies other than work. That's just how it is.



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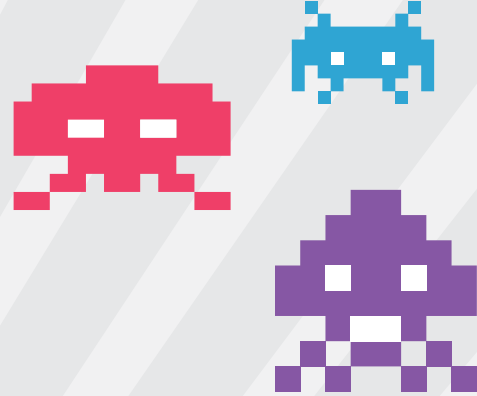
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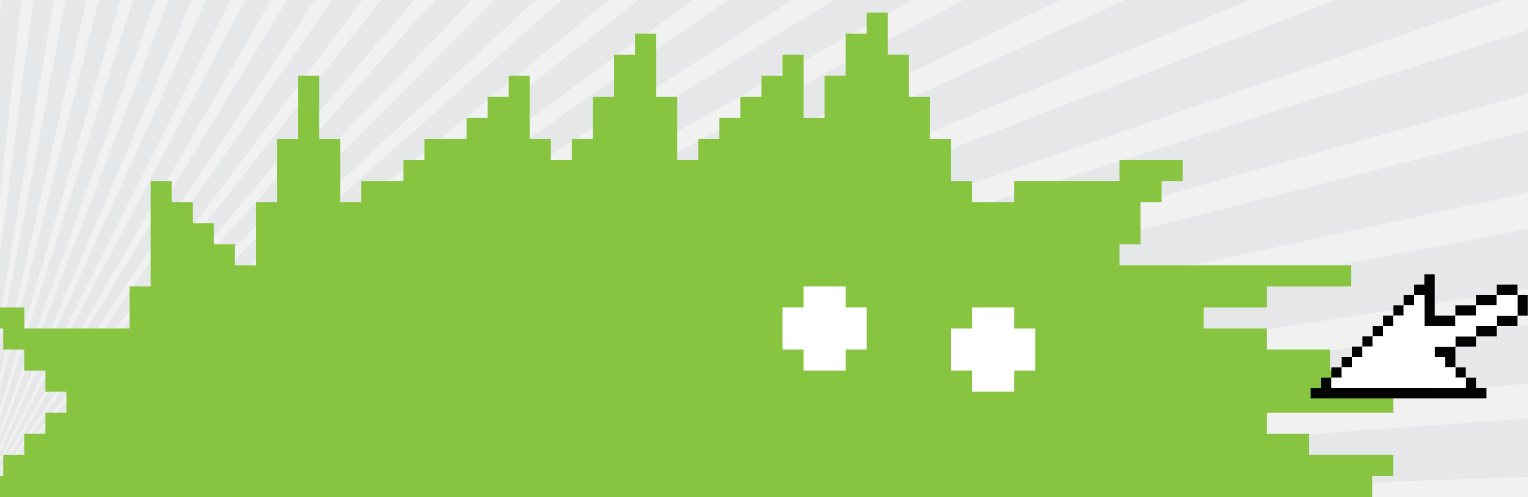
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